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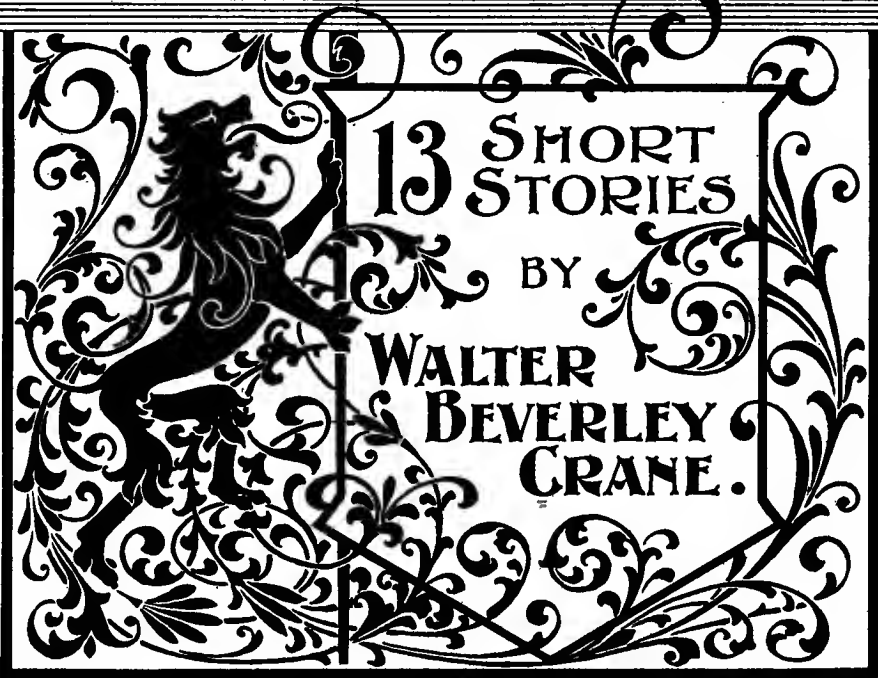
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ODD TALES



13 SHORT
STORIES

BY

WALTER
BEVERLEY
CRANE.

M. WITMARK & SONS,
NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND LONDON.

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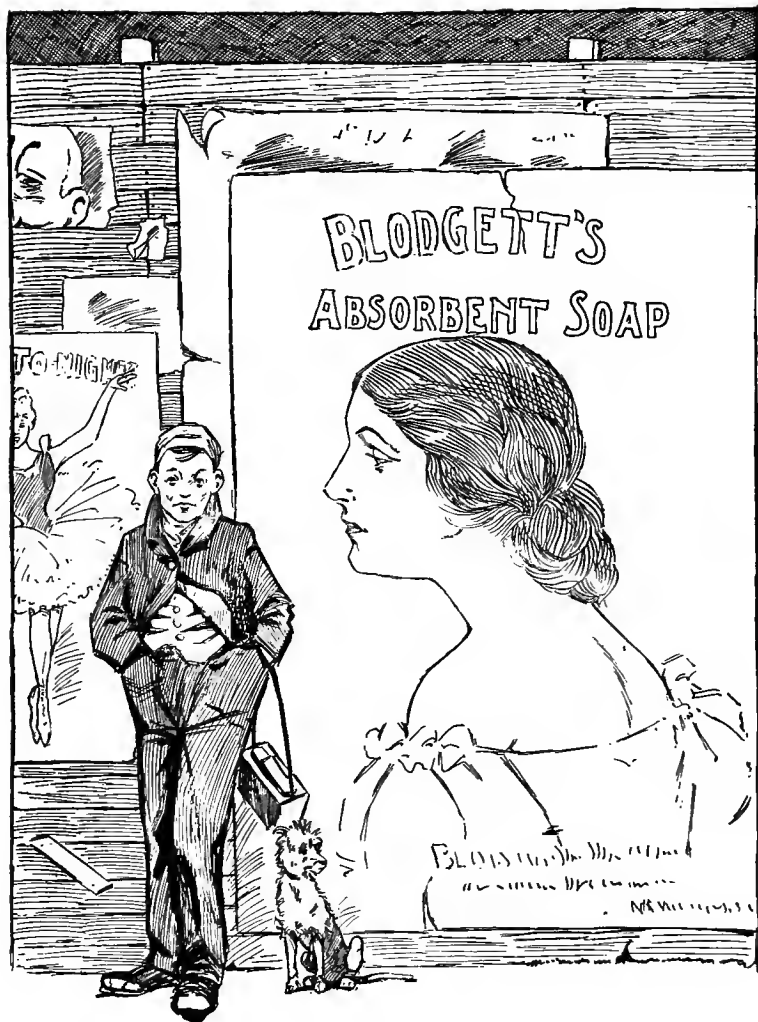
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*Through the courtesy and kindness of the
editors and publishers of "Romance,"
"Town Topics," "Vanity Fair,"
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and "The Metropolitan," the author is
permitted to reprint these : : : : :*

"ODD TALES."



MRS. VANE FLUTTERBY'S PHOTOGRAPH.

HAVING satisfied her social aspirations and reached that pinnacle of New York society called Push's Peak, Mrs. Vane Flutterby began to yearn for the reputation of professional beauty. She was far from being plain, her style was good and she possessed a mignonne attractiveness that made her a pretty, if not a classically beautiful woman. Like all womankind, her vanity got the better of her at times, and that good and clever judgment which had enabled her to reach and hold the Walhalla heights she now stood upon was not used when she told young Van Schaick Sloper to stop on his way uptown at Britzman's and ask for her photograph.

Mrs. Flutterby had a scheme, a deep and far-reaching one.

Now, as everybody knows, Britzman's shop on Broadway has a specialty of photographs of celebrities—crowned heads, actresses and beautiful society women.

Little Sloper, one of Mrs. Flutterby's numerous satellities, had begged her for her photograph.

"I haven't one," she replied with a bored air, "but if you care to take the trouble you might possibly get one at Britzman's on Broadway."

Mrs. Flutterby very well knew that Britzman had no likeness of her in his collection; that she was guilty of a base deception in sending little Sloper on such a wild-goose chase; but Mrs. Flutterby's schemes were machine-like in that they required many tools to ensure their completion—men of the stamp of Sloper, who always did as he was told.

For a number of days Britzman was bothered by young men who insisted he had photographs of the celebrated beauty, Mrs. Vane Flutterby, in stock, and demanded that he sell them some, offering absurdly high figures when Britzman professed ignorance of any such photograph. In

vain did Britzman protest he had never heard of the lady, that he had no photograph of her ; the fashionably dressed and solemn-visaged young chappies would smile incredulously and then depart in angry hauteur.

At length Britzman made up his mind that there was money in Mrs. Flutterby's photo and that as a prospective "good seller" it deserved investigation. Accordingly he hunted out Mrs. Flutterby's address in the Social Register and wrote her, requesting that she honor his photographer with a sitting, as his show window of photographs would not be complete without the picture of so fashionable a beauty.

To which Mrs. Flutterby made immediate reply, naming an early date for the sitting.

A week or so later the *faneurs* of Broadway noticed a new face among the bevy of beauties, the galaxy of crowned heads, the constellations of stars, that made Britzman's shop window so famous. The face was that of a rather ordinary type of American prettiness, devoid of any aristocratic distinction, composite in that it resembled an American woman—that type in which no racial distinction is apt to be perceivable.

Thousands passed by the Britzman collection, hundreds entered the shop, but none asked for the photograph labeled, "Mrs. Vane Flutterby."

Britzman had ordered fifty dozen in different poses, the favorite pose representing her reclining at full length on a lounge covered with costly white furs, clad in an exceedingly décolleté gown, a bewitching and seductive smile illuminating her features. He naturally supposed he would have no difficulty in disposing of the large order, so many earnest and ardent admirers of the lady had demanded one. But outside the few sold to Sloper and his brother *gommeux* there were no further calls for the photograph.

"*Vot der teufel mit das photograph gemacht!*" muttered Britzman. "*Who der teufel vos dot Mrs. Vane Flutterby anyways! Gott in Himmel, das thut mir leid mit a pain. She was not of der 400—I don't tink, nit!*" And Britzman sold two pictures of Lillian Russell for fifty cents more than they were worth.

"Am I addressing Mr. Britzman?" inquired a sharp business voice at that moment.

The sharp business voice wanted to know if Mr. Britzman had "a job lot of photos—old stock—any pretty face would do—tights didn't matter—wanted a good selling face—something slick and smooth that would go on an ad?"

Britzman looked up, a ray of hope flickering across his pale face. "Vot for you want dem photographiren?" he demanded breathlessly.

"My name is Samuel Blodgett," said the man. "I am the discoverer and sole proprietor of Blodgett's Wonderful Skin and Blood Beautifier, the finest medical toilet soap of the age. My discovery is that the blood can be purified and beautified from without, that the absorption of my soap through the pores of the skin cleanses the blood and beautifies the complexion at the same time. What is the use of taking nauseous resolvents and disordering the stomach when the blood—that great factor to a good complexion—can be reached by a shorter route—by the daily use of Blodgett's Absorbent Soap, a soap that saves time and money and acts both ways at once? I intend to put the photograph of a beautiful woman in every box, and I purpose to use her face as my trade-mark, and on all my advertisements. I shall advertise Blodgett's Wonderful Skin and Blood Beautifier regardless of expense—yes, sir, a cabinet photo will accompany every box—my lithographs will be of the most exquisite finish. I, er—but show me an attractive face."

"Vell," said Britzman, "*I haf a goot forty-nine tuzzen like dot,*" and he handed Blodgett the photograph of Mrs. Vane Flutterby, "*und I haf struck off all you want more at a sehr billiger price.*"

"Good!" exclaimed the soap man. "The picture pleases me. I'll buy it outright and copyright it. Order me ten thousand at once."

The high horse of Mrs. Flutterby's victoria went up on his hind legs opposite a sign board near the Plaza entrance to the Park a week later, and John and James nearly fell off the box as they recognized their mistress' likeness in the centre of the advertisement of "Blodgett's Wonderful Skin and Blood Beautifier."

As for Mrs. Flutterby, she returned home with an attack of nervous prostration and sent for her lawyer.

The lawyer called on Blodgett and demanded to know by what author-

ity he used the picture of his fair client on the advertisement of the Skin and Blood Beautifier.

Blodgett showed him a copy of the contract which Britzman had been careful to have Mrs. Flutterby sign. The contract contained a clause which stipulated that the photograph was sold outright to Britzman with the privilege to sell and dispose of same in any manner he saw fit, and also carried the privilege to exhibit the same publicly.

The contract was so clearly worded that no technical flaw could be discovered, and the lawyer retired in a discouraged frame of mind.

Meanwhile the town's bill-boards were being decorated with Mrs. Vane Flutterby's picture and the accompanying advertisement of Blodgett's Skin and Blood Beautifier. "L" station "ads" held her cabinet photo in the neatly framed signs of the remedy. Drug shops displayed her photo on their counters alongside of boxes of the Beautifier. The toilet rooms of the hotels and other public lavatories were graced by her picture with the name of the advertisement underneath. Mrs. Vane Flutterby's picture was everywhere.

Half of her friends had cut her dead for the vulgar and ostentatious display she was making of her charms, and the other half was buying boxes of the Skin and Blood Beautifier to see what she really looked like.

Blodgett was continually adding new features to his advertisements.

One day Mrs. Flutterby awoke to learn that he was using her photograph as a "before and after" ad. This was adding insult to injury. She burst into angry tears and threw the hateful picture in the fire, bidding her maid never bring her another like it. And, indeed, it was a horrid counterfeit presentment of Mrs. Flutterby—the "before using" picture!

Further liberties were taken—very objectionable, though flattering, nude female forms were attached to her face and she was made to represent Aphrodite on her natal morn and Psyche at her bath, while the merits of Blodgett's Wonderful Skin and Blood Beautifier were set forth in fiery red letters underneath.

Mrs. Flutterby was rapidly becoming a fit subject for an insane asylum. Her physician ordered immediate departure from the scene of

her daily mortification. At six o'clock that evening she was aboard the French liner en route for Havre.

Down the bay into the gathering twilight slowly glided the Atlantic greyhound. Overhead the stars chimed a sweet *bon voyage* and the faint breeze from the ocean wafted zephyrs breathing respite and peace to the persecuted woman.

Mrs. Flutterby, dressing for dinner, looked out through the porthole of the stateroom of her *cabin de luxe suite*. What was that huge, flashing transparency over on the Jersey shore? A Coney Island boat passed between her and the sign, but the next moment it flashed out of the darkness again. "Blodgett's Skin and Blood Beautifier" read the green, yellow and red letters, and in the center of the transparency a distorted image of herself grinned mockingly at her—the alternating colored lights behind it giving her face all the tints of the rainbow.

Mrs. Flutterby fell fainting in the arms of her maid.

"Courage, madam," whispered the girl, "there is rest beyond the sea."

But the little French maid did not know Blodgett.

Blodgett was not the man to let grass grow under his feet. Already an English and French syndicate were pushing the Beautifier on the other side of "the pond." London and Paris were placarded with "before and after" using pictures of Mrs. Flutterby, and glowing descriptions of the wonderful efficacy of the Beautifier could be read everywhere.

In London Mrs. Flutterby consulted a well-known authority on international law. The eminent barrister told her he could do nothing for her, but advised her to see Blodgett in person and plead with him. This advice—costing one hundred guineas—Mrs. Flutterby considered good, and finding life as unendurable in the Continent as it had been in America resolved to return to New York and go down on her knees to Blodgett for mercy.

The luxuriously furnished private office of the president of the Blodgett Skin and Blood Beautifier Company held two people, a veiled lady and Blodgett himself.

"To whom am I indebted for the honor of this visit?" asked Blodgett, politely showing the fair unknown a seat.

Please bear in mind that Blodgett was a gentleman at heart as well as in manners; though guilty of dabbling in soap and patent medicines, Blodgett's instincts were not wholly commercial.

"A long-suffering woman speaks, Mr. Blodgett," answered his visitor, raising her veil over her tearful eyes.

At sight of her face Blodgett jumped clean out of his chair. "Good God!" he exclaimed, quite forgetting himself, "the original of the Blodgett Wonderful Skin and Blood Beautifier photograph; Madame," he continued, regaining his composure, "they have grossly caricatured you—such loveliness could never be reproduced by the camera. Permit me to offer a thousand apologies on behalf of the art that can never hope to do your beauty justice. Ah!" he sighed, "if the photograph only possessed a tenth of your beauty the Blodgett Skin and Blood Beautifier would quadruple its sales."

"Mr. Blodgett," said Mrs. Flutterby in icy tones, "for the past six months my life has been made a veritable hell to me by reason of the use you have made of my photograph. I have lost friends, peace of mind, and all the happiness I once knew, through your persecution of me. You have made my life so unendurable that I have come to beg you on my bended knees to use some other means of promoting the interest of your Beautifier. I implore you—I adjure you as a man—as a gentleman—to refrain from using my face on your advertisements in the future! Surely you will be generous—you can well afford to make this slight reparation to a woman you have so cruelly wronged."

"Madame," said Blodgett, greatly moved, "what you request is impossible. Blodgett's Skin and Blood Beautifier without the trademark of your beautiful face would not sell. It would ruin me to do as you request. Ask anything but that, my dear madame."

"Mr. Blodgett," cried Mrs. Flutterby in sheer desperation, "what would induce you to give me the relief I petition for?"

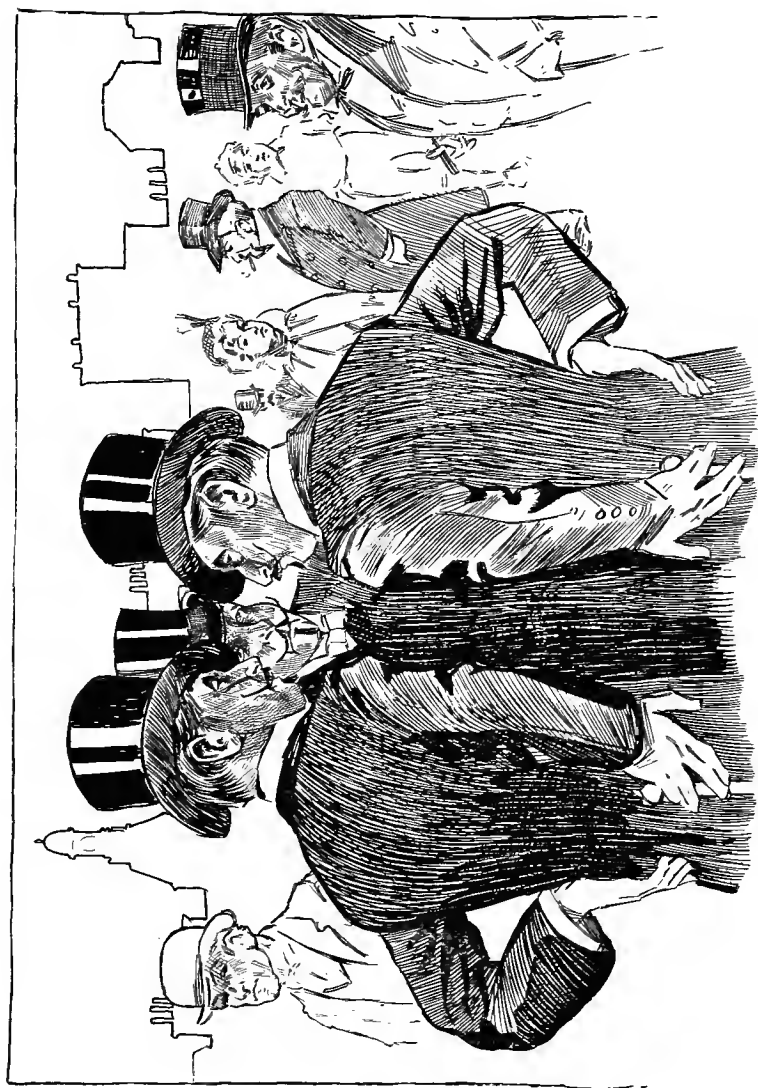
"Madame," said Blodgett very quietly, calmly and earnestly, making a low obeisance as he carried her gloved hand to his lips, "on one condition would I turn over the management of my Beautifier to you—"

"And that is?" eagerly interrupted Mrs. Flutterby.

"That you become my wife," answered Blodgett. "I do not know but that I may be addressing a married woman," he pursued passionately; "but if you are a maid or widow listen to me. I fell in love with your picture the moment I saw it; but I never dreamed the dear reality could be so fair. Mrs. Flutterby, I love you. Honor me with your hand and help me with your heart, and Blodgett's Skin and Blood Beautifier is yours with its owner."

Ten minutes later an order went out from the main office of the Beautifier cancelling the sale of ten thousand boxes of soap containing the photograph; and cablegrams and telegrams flashed to the four quarters of the globe commanding agents to *paint out* the picture on the sign boards in their territory.

A new trade-mark for the soap was designed, but that was changed a year later when a little Blodgett appeared on the scene. Blodgett thought his baby emblematic of the purity of the Skin and Blood Beautifier.



TRIPLETS.

TRIPLETS were Alphonse, Baptiste, and Camille de l'Aumelette-Soufflée, scions of the noble but impoverished House of Soufflée.

Alphonse was on the staff of the *Feuille de Radis*, the most rabid of radical papers published in Paris, and he was in the habit of slinging ink in the faces of his aristocratic friends, of whom he could no longer speak kindly.

Baptiste, at Brussels, just managed to breathe as a briefless barrister; and Camille ate garlic and sucked oranges in Madrid as a clerk attached to the French Legation.

Between these brothers there existed the love of some half-dozen Damons and Pythias, supposing thirds could have been made of the two gentlemen mentioned.

Dumas's Three Guardsmen would not have been "in it" with Alphonse, Baptiste, and Camille, so far as loyalty to one another was concerned. These brothers were as alike in personal appearance and characteristics as the proverbial peas in a pod. Indeed, what is more remarkable, their accent and inflection were the same. They were echoes of each other.

A certain mysterious current of magnetism had existed between the three from the hour of birth. Even though miles apart, the other two could feel acutely whatever the other one suffered physically, and *vice versa, versa vice*. It is related that as children when one was being spanked, the other two (in the garden of the château beyond) would suffer and cry as loudly as the spankee in the heights of the château's nursery. This current—for want of a better name—shall be called *sympathetic vibration*.

It was a positive, not a negative, current, in that only pain, and not

pleasure, could be transmitted; otherwise they might as babes have ignited in their big crib.

As a writer for the *Feuille de Radis*, it chanced one day in the line of Alphonse's duty to have to abuse and insult one Monsieur Roquet, editor of *La Gazette des Gommeux*.

Monsieur Bompard Roquet was a fire-eating, sword-swallowing little journalist, who had embraced journalism solely for the opportunities it offered him to get into trouble and enter the field of honor, and thus satisfy his abnormal appetite for blood.

The philippics Alphonse had hurled at him in days gone by were as nothing compared to his last polite insinuation, i. e., "that the editor of *La Gazette des Gommeux* was a nincompoop, his thoughts glue, and his pen a mucilage brush," which in French means more than it does in English. Whereupon Monsieur Roquet sent his seconds to Monsieur Alphonse de l'Aumelette-Soufflée;—but perhaps Monsieur Roquet had better finish this story, the narration of a man who is haunted on account of a psycho-physio-thaumato-teleopathic phenomenon.

"Good evening, Roquet; sit down and tell us the story of 'The Phantom Duellist.' What are you going to have? *Garçon, une absinthe gommée pour monsieur!*"

"*Hé bien, mes amis*, you see before you a haunted man, the most unhappy man in Christendom. The Wandering Jew led a life of joy, I believe, when I think of the miserable existence I am dragging out. Why is it I am now thousands of miles away from home, *La Belle France et la vie de Paris?* Because I dare not return.

A phantom duellist awaits me—even now he may tap me on the shoulder and tender me his *carte*—a phantom duellist with as many lives as the leaves in Vallambrosa. You smile when I say a phantom can have lives. Ah, but remember, it is a phantom brotherhood; when one brother is slain another takes his place. It was as editor of *La Gazette des Gommeux*, the world-known and fashionable gazette of the Boulevards, with a circulation of five hundred thousand a day, that I met the first—no, I shall not say first; permit me, messieurs, to contradict myself, there is only *one*—I called out Alphonse de l'Aumelette-Soufflée.

He wrote for *Le Radis*, a contemptible sheet. He had grossly insulted me. My pen was wiped for the day, but I plunged it into red ink when I read his scurrilous attack upon me—the first journalist of Europe. He accepted my challenge, named swords, and early the next morning we met in the Bois.

With the first pass I pinked him to the heart.

Seconds, surgeons, and I had a most palatable, a most delicious breakfast at *Les Trois Pigeons*, and the body—did not the body? Why should it not have enjoyed *un déjeuner à la fourchette* under ground with the worms forevermore?

But it did not.

It was past noon when I reached the office of *La Gazette des Gommeux* and sat down to write the story of the duel for the evening edition. I intended it as a warning to all future calumniators. I debouched on the Boulevard des Italiens just on the hour when the papers were coming out.

Editors and journalists spread in thirsty hordes along the whole line of thoroughfare between the Théâtre des Variétés and the Grand Hotel; the pavements and cafés were teeming with bustle. Seated outside the Café Riche, taking my absinthe, my paper in my hand, I chanced to turn my head to the left, conscious that someone was staring intently at me. *Mon Dieu, messieurs*, but the dead looked me in the face! The glass I was about lifting to my lips dropped to the pavement with a crash. I started to my feet, every hair on my head bristling with horror.

“Alphonse de l’Aumelette-Soufflée stood before me in the flesh—and living!”

“He approached me!”

“Trembling in every limb I steadied myself against an iron pillar to meet this apparition, this visitation from the bourne from which no traveler returns, as your immortal has said.

“‘*Pardon, monsieur,*’ It said, ‘but am I addressing Monsieur Bompard Roquet, *de la Gazette des Gommeux?*’

“It spoke! *Mon Dieu, mes amis*, It spoke!

“‘Ye-e-s,’ I stammered; ‘to whom am I indebted for this honor?’

“‘To Monsieur de l’Aumelette-Soufflée,’ It coldly answered.

“ ‘But, monsieur, I killed you yesterday.’

“ ‘It was my brother,’ It replied ; ‘you will now have to fight me.’

“ ‘Impossible,’ I cried. ‘You are dead. I refuse to fight a dead man.

“ ‘It is not so,’ It continued, handing me a *carte*, which read Baptiste de l’Aumelette-Soufflée. ‘I am one of his brothers.’

“ ‘One of Its brothers !

“ ‘This is a base imposition, monsieur. You are dead and have no right to thus intrude yourself upon polite society.’

“ ‘I will demonstrate to you that I am *not* dead,’ It said ; and with that It struck me across the face with Its glove. Could a Roquet take such an insult—even from a corpse?

“ ‘Wretch, fiend, devil, spirit !’ I yelled. ‘Pistols ! I shall meet you for the second time to-morrow. Pistols ! At dawn in the Bois. Pistols ! I shall send you my seconds. Let me pass, monsieur, let me pass !’

“ ‘I rushed through the astonished crowd of waiters and *habitués* and sprang into a passing *fiacre*. I drove to the house of Poussy, one of my seconds.

“ ‘Poussy !’ I exclaimed, falling in his arms, ‘Poussy, I am damned ; *ou bien, que je suis ivre !*’

“ ‘What is the matter ?’ he asked.

“ ‘De l’Aumelette-Soufflée is alive !’

“ ‘I do not gainsay you, Roquet, for his seconds have waited upon me. He is a twin brother, I believe, whose facial resemblance to his brother Alphonse is such that even a man of less nervous temperament and excitability than yourself might have been rudely shocked. Come, brace up, *mon ami*, you have but him to finish.’

“ ‘Poussy,’ I asked, ‘do you believe all that?’

“ ‘I saw Monsieur Baptiste de l’Aumelette-Soufflée an hour ago myself. He did not say he intended speaking to you. He must be a man ignorant of the etiquette of the code to be guilty of such a *gaucherie* as communicating with the principal without the medium of a second. While I was waiting for you at the Café Riche he entered. I must admit that I, too, was rather startled at the resemblance to the deceased. He

pointed me out to his friends, Le Comte de Poisson Vieux and Monsieur le Baron Boum d'Été. They presented his challenge in due form and left.

“Without any preliminary he sat down by my side and commenced as follows: ‘You are Monsieur Poussy, who acted with Monsieur Rougechien as second for Monsieur Roquet in the duel of this morning, when my poor brother Alphonse fell. We are a curious family, full of phenomena—metaphysical, physiological, and psychological—whatever you choose to dignify it by; scientific men have no name for it. Of that I do not care to speak. Suffice it to say, monsieur, that we call it clairvoyance, *clairvoyance extraordinaire*. I was about rising this morning in my room in the Rue de Chaumelle in the city of Brussels. Suddenly I fell back in bed as if my heart had been pierced by a red-hot rapier, and I gasped for breath. The pain left me as suddenly as it had come and I saw a green glade, the sheen of a lake; and then farther on through the vista, against a forest of trees for a background, stood seven men, two of whom were engaged with swords. One of them fell. He was my brother. I glanced at my watch. It was six o'clock. I flew to avenge him, and here I am, Monsieur Poussy, arrived in Paris in time to call Monsieur Roquet out by daylight to-morrow morning.’

“‘Roquet, *mon ami*, his language was so uncanny—for he elaborated the scene in the Bois to a dreadfully realistic extent—that, forgetting all about your coming, I bade him a hasty *au revoir* and departed.’

“‘And you believe all this, Poussy?’ I repeated again in awe-stricken tones, and a vague impression that the shock of the meeting might have been too much for Poussy’s *flaneur* mind made me shudder.

“‘Bah! Bosh!! Rot!!!’ I suddenly exclaimed. ‘Spirits can lie. I do not believe a word of it. It is all a horrid dream. I do not believe I have even fought Alphonse.’

“‘Read your own account of the duel in *Les Gommeux*. Besides, has not the white office cat of *Le Radis* a ribbon of black around his throat? It is only too true, Roquet. Retire early, *mon cher ami*, for your arm and hand must be steady to-morrow morning. And do not drink any more, Roquet; *qui boit trop voit toutes des choses*. Bon soir, Roquet, *mon brav*, et dormez bien!’

"Sleep well !"

"I did nothing but walk the streets that night.

"On leaving Poussy, the first thing I did was to hurry to the shop of the undertaker who had taken charge of Alphonse de l'Aumelette-Soufflée's body.

" 'There he lies, monsieur,' taking me into the rear room.

"Yes, there lay Alphonse de l'Aumelette-Soufflée in a beautiful rosewood box, ready to be taken to the church the next morning.

"It *must* then be a brother, a twin brother, I reasoned, identical with Alphonse in every respect ; but Alphonse had never mentioned the fact to any of us.

"While in the room with the body I felt comparatively at ease, but emerging into the darkness of the night, all the old horror came back. At every street corner I glanced around warily, expecting to be confronted by the phantom challenger.

Finally I drifted into 'Le Cercle Baccarat' and spent the night over cards and wine.

"At five o'clock I sent messengers for my seconds, Poussy and Monsieur Mont de Piété, of *La Tante*. They came and virtually had to carry me to the carriage in waiting—I was so weak from terror and horror.

I hardly knew where I was until the sharp command '*Faites prêt*' rang out ; a handkerchief fluttered to the ground as I looked up, and then I saw It stand for a moment before me and plunge head first to the ground, blood spurting from a hole in Its forehead.

"I was in no humor for a breakfast that morning, messieurs, neither was it my intention to print or publish the details of this spirit meeting, this dream (for the public would have recognized it as such.)

It had haunted me all night, and then, like a spirit, had faded away in the early dawn when spirits take their flight to the land of djinns.

"All day long I lay in a half-waking stupor, seeing, hearing things mortal never dared dream of before ; my head under a pillow ; double-locked and double-bolted in a room at the Hotel de Spaghetto, a little hole of a hostelry in an unknown *quartier* of Paris, where I was sure no one would ever find me.

"Toward evening, after copious *verres de cognac*, I gathered some little courage. *La Gazette des Gommeux* and my pride came to my rescue.

"'Bompard Roquet, you must not permit anything to interfere with the editorial function,' I said to myself. 'You are a servant of the public. You must not disappoint your public. By heaven, no! Shall I have a fine hash made of my leader by leaving it to incapable brains? By heaven, no! I must return to the office.'

"Ordering a closed carriage, and promising a princely *pourboire*, I was whirled on the wheels of the wind to my waiting paper.

Mounting the stairs in bounds I—*mère de Dieu*, shall I ever forget it?

Descending majestically, like an avenging shade, came the apparition!

By all the Holy Innocents, messieurs, I lost consciousness, and fell backward, headlong down the long flight of stairs.

"When I came to, It was bending over me. '*Pardon, monsieur*, but am I addressing Monsieur Bompard Roquet?' *It inquired.*

The calmness of despair seized me.

"'Enough of this jesting,' I replied, and the stillness of my voice seemed awful to my ears. 'Enough, enough; leave me, leave me. For the love of that Hereafter we both expect to inherit, leave me!'

"'Are you Monsieur Roquet?' the ghost repeated, sternly.

"'Yes, yes,' I pleaded, penitently, then added, somewhat petulantly, 'you know me well enough not to ask such senseless questions. What will you now?'

"'Slayer of my brothers, I have come to avenge them. You will not refuse to fight *me*?'

"I tell you, messieurs, to the best of my knowledge, Alphonse never had a brother! Was his persecution of me to take the form of countless avenging brothers? Why not be a man and be himself?

"In a moment I had made up my mind; I should refuse to recognize this spirit in the flesh. I called for help, and several of my staff rushed downstairs, among them Poussy.

"Poussy remarked, coolly, 'Well, Monsieur Roquet, what is the matter?' (Poussy had such an exasperating way of recovering his composure.)

“‘Don’t you see It?’ I gasped, pointing at the figure.

“‘I see a gentleman who is awaiting an answer, Monsieur Roquet,’ he replied. ‘Monsieur Camille de l’Aumelette-Soufflée, *attaché* to the French Legation at Madrid, the remaining one of the triplets you have had the honor to meet.’

“‘It is a lie!’ I shrieked. ‘It is one and the same. Take It away; take me away!’

“‘Monsieur Roquet forgets himself,’ remarked Poussy. ‘The language he has just used is that which no gentleman can let pass unnoticed. Monsieur Camille awaits an acceptance; unfortunately he is friendless in Paris and has no one to act for him.’

“‘Poussy, are you mad?’

“‘No, Monsieur Roquet, but you are.’

“‘The spirit of Alphonse now spoke: ‘What is your answer, Monsieur Roquet?’

“‘I refuse to kill you again,’ I replied; ‘it’s fool’s play; I am wasting time, energy, and money on you. Put me out of existence if you will—yes, do it now, this moment, but do not haunt me any longer.’

“‘I shall be under the painful necessity of chastising Monsieur Roquet in public, at this moment, before his friends,’ It replied with a sneer.

“‘Everyone was staring at me. The little blood in my body that remained unfrozen, bade me stave off this insult.

“‘As you please, as you please; but it must come off this evening—at once. The same spot and melinite bombs at two paces, for not a piece of my body shall be carried from the field.’

“‘Nonsense, Monsieur Roquet,’ interposed Poussy; ‘do not be absurd. What weapons?’

“‘Anything that will exterminate,’ I groaned, making for the sanctum sanctorum of my inner office.

“‘Oh, the agony of that moment! Messieurs, my agitation, perturbation, and complete mental eclipse was such that I drank out of a bottle of ink, before I discovered it was not the cordial on my desk.

“‘In one hour we met. Never shall I forget the shame of the first few minutes on the field: I threw down my rifle! (I had named re-

peating rifles, sixteen shots to the magazine, distance twenty paces, to advance firing when the handkerchief fell). I threw down my rifle and was about to run when my seconds seized me by the arms and held me firmly.

“‘Roquet,’ they whispered, ‘are you a son of France, the first journalist of Europe, the editor of *La Gazette des Gommeux*, that you should act in this manner? Remember the honor of your name, Roquet, the reputation of your journal; the eyes of the world are upon you.’

“‘Let It prove to me that It is not a spirit, not from the grave; that it is flesh and blood and not a phantom, and I will fight,’ I replied.

“‘I repeat to you he is a de l’Aumelette-Soufflée, a gentleman of noble and illustrious family. You have already killed two——’

“‘I know I have,’ I screamed.

“‘Of his brothers.’

“‘No, no, no; it was one and the same, I swear to you!’ I cried.

“‘The spirit came toward me where I stood in a puddle of perspiration.

“‘Monsieur Roquet,’ It said, ‘to satisfy you that these gentlemen speak the truth I will tell you of my brothers and our history. We were triplets; prototypes each of the other, echoes of ourselves. From our birth Alphonse, Baptiste, and I have been wired, so to speak, by a mysterious current of electrical sympathy, a subtile medium, perhaps, in your eyes.

“‘Though miles apart we knew and felt the physical sufferings of each other; and it was so ordained by our Maker that whenever one of us should receive an injury or mortal wound the other two would feel the same as acutely the same moment.

“‘When you slew my brother Alphonse I was in Madrid, taking a morning ride, cantering home through the Calle de Alcalá. I had arrived at the Puerta del Sol when I nearly threw my horse off his haunches, falling back in the saddle, my disengaged hand clasping my agonized heart. The pain—as if a sword at white heat had been plunged therein—as quickly passed away to bring the vision of my brother Alphonse lying dead in the Bois de Boulogne, a man standing over him with a dripping sword. I urged my horse into a mad gallop, pulling up at the gates of the Embassy.

“ ‘Securing leave of absence I took the first express for Paris. Spanish railways are slow. After several delays I arrived at Bordeaux. It was about six in the morning.

“ ‘While sipping my coffee in the *vagon lit* of the *train-de-luxe*, a sensation as if a ball of fire had been shot through my head caused me to spill my coffee and gaze wildly into space. The picture I saw had all the color and life of a deep-dyed impressionist. The same scene again—the Bois—only the autumn leaves were of a richer red, the atmosphere hazier, the distant lake ruffled by the chill breeze, and the men of sterner mold. A white handkerchief blew idly about, and Baptiste, a bullet in his forehead, lay stretched on the brown sward. You, with smoking pistol, stood farther away this time, and your hand was trembling.

“ ‘Now can you believe me when I say I am Camille de l’Aumelette-Soufflée, the last of the Soufflés, the last of triplets?’

“ ‘No,’ I replied faintly; ‘ ’tis what you’ve told me before. And now, man, devil or god, kill me if you will, or let me leave this field alone, and forever after keep your peace.’

“ ‘For answer It took Its position and raised Its rifle.

“ ‘Ready! Aim!’ cried Poussy.

“ ‘Mechanically I had brought my rifle to my shoulder.

“ ‘As ‘Fire!’ broke the deathly stillness It plunged downward to the earth. Can you believe it? Endowed with such powers, actuated by the great spirit of revenge, It had failed—no, not failed; It *would not* hit me!

“ ‘A bullet had severed Its jugular vein. Feeling myself unscathed I burst into tears and cursed the day I was born.

“ ‘You had better leave the country,’ counselled Poussy; ‘these meetings of late have excited the attention of the police.’

“ ‘I have only killed one man,’ I replied.

“ ‘Do not argue with me, Roquet,’ he answered. ‘Here are funds. Fly!’

“ ‘And here I am, messieurs, a haunted man, who can neither eat nor sleep, but only drink, drink, drink, and seek in wet damnation some oblivion of the past.’”

BOB HERVIER'S TYPEWRITER.

A TALE FROM "THE STREET."

OLD Mrs. Van Velleck dashed her cup of tea with arac, nibbled half a wafer, sniffed nervously, adjusted her pince-nez, and assumed a judicial expression.

"They all need watching,—a little quiet espionage, my dear ; 'twill do no harm."

"But I have every reason to repose implicit confidence in my husband," replied young Mrs. Hervier, a bride of six months. "Bob is so devoted to me, he never goes out without me. He doesn't even attend club elections. What is there to suspect?"

"My dear little girl," said Mrs. Van Velleck, "a woman should always be lovingly suspicious and fondly jealous of her husband in order to ensure that perfect domestic happiness so dear to connubiality—"here Mrs. Van paused to fill a glass with sherry from the decanter next the dainty glass arac barrel. "Did you ever stop to think,—'what kind of a life does he lead *down town*?' "

"Why,—no !" faltered Mrs. Hervier.

"Doesn't business occupy every minute of a man's time? What else could he be doing?"

"You poor, deluded darling !" sighed old Mrs. Van, gulping down the sherry and reaching for another wafer, "how innocent you are ! What tales I could tell of the stockbrokers of my girlhood days ! They are no better now;—a fast, dissolute set of men. Their lives make them so. Did you ever hear of such a thing as a stenographer and typewriter?" asked Mrs. Van.

"I believe Bob employs such people," replied Mrs. Hervier, somewhat uneasily.



"Well, my dear," continued Mrs. Van, slyly tapping the little arac barrel, under which she had pushed her empty tea cup, "a typewriter is either a machine or a woman. Men pay the machine, which is generally 'any old thing,' five or six dollars a week, out of which she has to pay for the oil to keep the machine in running order. But if it is a young, pretty, and seductive woman they pay anywhere from twenty to twenty-five dollars a week, and supply the necessary champagne and bromo seltzer to keep her going."

Mrs. Hervier gave a sudden gasp of horror.

"Dear, kind Mrs. Van," she cried, "what *would* you advise doing?"

Old Mrs. Van sniffed sympathetically, poured more arac in her tea-cup, and squeezed her pince-nez tighter. "Just to think, my dear," she whispered, "some of those brokers have lounges in their private offices, silver mounted toilette sets, even changes of raiment, Heaven only knows what! Oh, my dear, man's depravity to man—what is that quotation?—Eh? what would I advise? Well, I had poor dear Cornelius watched—'shadowed,' as they term it—up to the day of his death, by the trustworthy and most reliable firm of Searcher and Clews, private detectives.

"It is true they never discovered anything derogatory to Cornelius' dignity as *my* husband; at the same time I felt a sense of security, don't you know, after reading their daily report."

"My faith in Robert remains unshaken," replied Mrs. Hervier in trembling tones; "but as I wish to allay all suspicions and prove to *you* that there is no ground to suspect Robert of any-er-wrong doing, I shall send for one of the firm you recommend.

"They may be depended upon for absolute secrecy and diplomatic discretion?"

"Give Mr. Clews your perfect confidence; he is worthy a heart to heart talk," answered Mrs. Van, reassuringly.

* * * * *

Mr. Clews stood, hat in hand, before Mrs. Hervier in the drawing-room of the suite occupied by the Herviers in "The Mayfair."

The detective's smug face wore a self-satisfied, confident smile; his air was that of a man who had done his duty, and done it well.

"It is as I suspected, madam. Your husband, Mr. Hervier, does not lead the exemplary life you have been led to believe he lived."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Hervier, "what dreadful evidence have you secured?"

"With the ready acumen and keen insight of my profession I soon discovered the double life Mr. Hervier is leading. Prepare yourself, my dear madam, to hear the worst: I have learned—I should say discovered—that your husband is in the habit of taking his typewriter out to luncheon, that he attends Wednesday matinees with her, and,—I am informed by a very reliable authority,—that he is engaged to marry her!"

"Marry her!" echoed Mrs. Hervier, in horror-stricken tones, "why, Mr. Clews, that's—that's——"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Clews, coming to her rescue, "that's committing bigamy,—a very serious offense, I assure you."

"Mr. Clews," cried Mrs. Hervier excitedly, "this must be stopped at once. I order you to prevent it at any cost—this bigamy, do you understand? Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear,—that it should have come to this!" and giving vent to a great sob the young wife threw herself face down mid the billowy pillows of a divan.

"Calm yourself, my dear madam," said the suave and polite Mr. Clews; "there shall be no bigamy committed,—you'll have sufficient grounds for a divorce before he marries this woman."

"It gives me pleasure at such an opportune moment to hand you the professional card of a friend of mine, Mr. Simon Shyster, an exceedingly brilliant and always successful divorce lawyer."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Clews," sobbed young Mrs. Hervier, "and now leave me, I beg of you"

Mr. Clews made his best society bow to the heaving form on the divan, cast a last hawk-like glance about the apartment,—to satisfy himself of his client's financial standing,—and softly withdrew.

* * * * *

"You will find writing materials on the desk in the adjoining room, Mr. Clews," said young Mrs. Hervier the following afternoon, when the private detective called to submit additional memoranda.

"Write a full report of your investigations. When Mr. Hervier comes in I shall be able to confront him with irrefutable evidence of his guilt."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Mr. Clews, retiring into the little library of the apartment.

* * * * *

"Hello, Bright Eyes! Didn't expect to see me home so early, did you? You looked so wretched when I left this morning I have worried all day about you."

Mr. Hervier closed the door with a slam and set his silk hat down with a glad-to-get-home bang.

"Mr. Hervier," said his young wife in icy tones, "an outraged woman speaks. In a few minutes I shall be prepared to confront you with some horrible truths."

"Beatrice!" exclaimed the young man in utter astonishment, "Beatrice, my darling, what *is* the matter with you?"

"Don't 'darling' me," she angrily replied; "your assumption of innocence shows you to be but a poor actor. Your duplicity, your villany, is known, your——what! and you smile, laugh! Oh, this is too heartless, too cruel!" A great flood of tears drowned further utterance.

Bob Hervier was moved.

What a never failing argument—woman's tears!

"Beatrice, I may have done wrong in——."

"Don't speak to me, don't come near me. We part this day, and forever!"

"You dear foolish girl, how——."

"How *dare* you use such words,—hypocrite, liar, wretch!" she cried vehemently. "Go back to your *office* and your low *liaison*, go back to your typewriter, the kind I am told men fill with champagne and pay exorbitant salaries.

"I am going back to my mother. Oh, why did I ever leave my happy home for such a vile monster!"

"Now listen to me, just for a minute, Beatrice. Do be calm! It was very foolish to have——."

"And I *trusted* you implicitly" (big sob.)

"I was all that a wife should be. We were so happy together, but now (torrents of tears; heartbreaking sobs) where is the little place we planned in the country, the Arcadie to which we both looked forward? Ah, gone,—gone forever! (cessation of tears; temper steaming up.)

"Oh, how I should like to have my hands at that woman's throat!"

Bob Hervier burst out laughing.

"You despicable wretch!" screamed his better half.

"She's a nice girl," quietly observed Mr. Hervier, suddenly subsiding, "respectable, very honest, and a hard worker. Heigho! I suppose I'll have to discharge her. What a fool you are, Beatrice!" he sternly added.

"Mr. Hervier," she replied with dignity, "you add insult to the cruelest injury that can be done a loving wife."

"This joke has gone far enough," cried Hervier, growing red with anger, "I must be allowed to——."

"You are driving me mad. Leave me, leave me!" she hysterically cried. "As there is a just God above He will punish you for the torture you are inflict——."

"I beg pardon," said a voice from the library, the door of which had just been opened, "the report is finished, Mrs. Hervier. Ah, how de do!" added Mr. Clews patronizingly, observing Hervier.

Hervier bowed obsequiously to the detective. "This young man has rendered me some little aid, Mrs. Hervier," continued the private detective. "He's Mr. Hervier's book-keeper and cashier; I told him he might prove a valuable witness, don't you know? If I may inquire, though, er,—what is the nature of his business with you? I should not care to have a non-professional mixed up in this case; it might conflict seriously with my efforts in your behalf."

Mrs. Hervier stared at the detective in open-eyed wonder.

Hervier had dropped in a *voltaire* and was roaring with laughter.

"Bob, what is the meaning of all this?" demanded Mrs. Hervier, profoundly perplexed.

"It's the best joke of the season, my dear," laughed her husband.

"This modern Vidocq should be attached to Scotland Yard or the Central Office. He's a wonder! He came down to my office, and finding me at work on the books,—Edmunds, my book-keeper and cashier, having gone for the day—mistook me for a clerk. I soon learned his little game, and then I jollied him to the best of my ability, giving him 'valuable information' regarding 'my employer's' habits, vices, and—antecedents. Your private *detective*," here, Hervier cast a look of withering scorn in the direction of the unhappy Clews, "was too lazy and niggardly to investigate and trace the movements of the man he was paid to shadow, and took the pseudo book-keeper's word for evidence and ocular proof of all the acts mentioned in the report he is about to offer you. In his bill of expenses he will have itemized every lie he has told you."

"My dear sir," began Clews.

"Get out of here, or I'll throw you out!" angrily cried Bob Hervier.

"But something is due me," whined the private detective.

"Yes—*this*!" said Hervier, and Clews received a hearty kick that sent him flying out of the room.

"Dearest," said Bob Hervier, when he had recovered his composure, "who put you up to all this damned nonsense?"

"That horrid, gossiping, old busybody,—Mrs. Van Velleck. She made me so insanely jealous and suspicious. Oh, forgive me, Bob dear. I'll never be guilty of such foolishness again, as long as I live. Bob," she said, after a long pause, unlocking herself from his arms and looking him straight in the eyes, "I forgot to ask you a question. Have you a typewriter in your office?"

"Yes, love," answered Bob, "but it's broken. I'll take you down town to-morrow morning and let you look at it."



HIS WIFE OR HIS LIFE.

HIS skill with the knife had made John Hamilton the foremost surgeon of the day.

As "the One-eyed Wonder," his professional brethren admired, envied, and hated him,—a man to admire for his daring as an operator, to envy for his wonderful success, and to hate for his courageous conviction; for Dr. Hamilton did not hesitate to stamp surgical mediocrity with the contempt it deserves.

His *sobriquet*, "One-Eyed Hamilton," had followed him through his professional life.

There was some mystery enshrouding the loss of the eye; it had happened years past during his last year at college, and gossip was very vague in her many theories regarding the man's great misfortune, and "how it had happened."

It was generally attributed to a laboratory explosion and Dr. Hamilton did not take pains to correct this impression. He sat in his exquisitely finished and furnished office one afternoon in late September and slowly re-read the telegram that had brought him back to the hot and humid town.

He read: "Cecil fatally injured, hunting-field, internal injuries. Consultation advised. Come at once," and the signature read, "Vera."

The surgeon's hand sought his waistcoat pocket a second time and again he consulted his chronometer.

"Thomas!" he called, and the well-trained orderly was at his elbow.

"Telephone the Long Island Railroad—division superintendent—to have a special train in readiness. I find we have not time to catch the 4.30. Place my case of instruments in the brougham and then go ahead in a hansom and hurry up things at the station. I shall need two

trained nurses as well. Telephone the hospital to send them down to Southampton on the next regular train."

He rose from his chair and walked out into the magnificent suite of reception and drawing-rooms, his head bowed and his firm, well-knit hands tightly clasped behind him. He was thinking of other days, of that happy past when he and Vera Calthorpe had been boy and girl lovers. What a change the years had wrought! What a change the years had brought!

And now *his* day had come, the man she had married, the man who had nearly ruined his whole career by the cruel injury he had done him, lay between life and death, and he, John Hamilton, was called upon to save the brute's life.

"His wife or his life?" This was the question the bitter, bitter past now made him ask himself.

"Everything ready, sir," announced the butler, handing him his hat and gloves.

"Tell Dr. Darby the case is a very serious one," said Dr. Hamilton as the man opened the door. "Ask him to please fill all other calls."

"Yes, Dr. Hamilton," answered the man, and as he closed the door after the hurrying surgeon he muttered to himself: "It *must* be a serious case. I never saw the Doctor look like that before."

* * * * *

In the gathering twilight, by the half-opened French window of the villa's drawing-room, stood a woman gazing down the driveway.

There was more of impatient anticipation than of anxious impatience in her attitude. Her well-bred face was coldly beautiful and devoid of expression; the patrician pride of the bearing almost stern, and as she watched and waited, she murmured: "What will be, will be."

Overhead, in a brightly lighted bed-room, surrounded by nurses and physicians, lay a dying man.

"If Hamilton doesn't arrive within another five minutes we had better go on without him," said one of the surgeons. "He has no pulse. Nurse," he added, rather sharply, "make less noise."

The gravity of the situation made the man nervous and irritable;

besides, his professional pride was hurt. Why had not *he* been permitted to perform the operation?

A whirr of wheels outside, and the opening and closing of doors.

"The New York surgeon is here," whispered a nurse, as silently she and her co-worker made the final preparations.

In the twilight of the drawing-room a man and woman met face to face, after many years.

It was not a time for words, excuses, vain recriminations or sentiment; it was a question of life and death to both.

To the man it meant, "his life or his wife;" to the woman what *more* did it mean? All love for the man in the room above had died, otherwise she would have been at his side at *that* moment.

"Vera!" he had murmured as he clasped her hand.

"Jack!" the woman had passionately replied.

"Whatever surgical science can do for him shall be done," he said.

"Is there *hope* for him?" asked the woman, and there was that in her tone and look that made John Hamilton lose all confidence in himself.

He was a cold, calculating man, with all a surgeon's cold-blooded indifference to human life; he had often remarked to his *confreres*: "Is not the science of medicine founded on *conjecture* and improved by *murder*?"

"Is there hope for him?" she echoed.

"The deviation of the knife the sixteenth of an inch means death in some operations. What will be, will be!"

He had repeated the very words she had murmured to herself while waiting and watching for him.

Surely these two were of the same school of philosophy, of the same mould of character,—heartless, cold, and calculating, worthy representatives of a *fin de siècle* type.

The two local practitioners and the white-clad nurses stood back as he entered the room and approached the bed-side.

"Place him on the table," said Dr. Hamilton, after making an examination.

"I should not etherize him," he remarked after a short consultation with the others,—“heart action too weak,—local anaesthetics may be applied and hypodermics of brandy administered.”

To which the two lesser lights assented with deferential words of acquiescence.

The glittering array of carefully sterilized steel, which lay in basins filled with antiseptic washes, gleamed bright through the water under the strong light afforded by the powerful reflectors.

At a nod from his master the surgeon's orderly drew out a long thin blade of more than razor-like sharpness and handed it to the operator; the nurses stood ready with pads and sprays, the two local physicians busied themselves with pulse and temperature for the moment.

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Hamilton in low and clear tones, "I shall not go into any explanation of the peculiar incision I'm about to execute,—the celebrated German surgeon, Von Kreede, of Dresden, has taken the same desperate chance,—the case being identically the same."

The silence in the room was death-like; the ticking of the little French clock on the mantel was startling in its loudness; the breathing of the man on the table sounded heavy and stertorous to all, yet his waning vitality did not permit more than a sighing respiration.

"His wife or his life?"

Downstairs a woman was waiting the result. The woman he had loved and loved. Before him, under the strong white light, lay the scarcely animate body of his life-long enemy, the man who had nearly ruined his life, (but who had made him, nevertheless, "*the One-Eyed Wonder*,") by gouging out his eye is a desperate fight in the old college days when they had met one night to fight for the hand of the girl who now, grown to womanhood, stood between them again.

"His wife or his life?"

A woman's life and happiness were at stake. He was no egoist, but his intention, born of the meeting a few moments past, told him that the wife of Cecil Calthorpe was only a wife to him in name, that she loved *him* again, the discarded lover of the old, old days.

"Is there *hope* for him?"

Her intonation and meaning glance were heard and seen again, but this time with the ears and eyes of a jealous lover.

"His wife or his life?"

John Hamilton was himself now. His hand did not tremble, his one eye gleamed cold and bright as he grasped the flabby, unhealthy flesh of the profligate before him and seized the keen blade.

Which would conquer,—professional pride or the passion of love?

A slow, cynical smile played about his thin lips,—the incision was made with great deliberation.

* * * * *

As he washed his hands Dr. Hamilton's cynicism asserted itself again, but there was pride in his look and triumph in his voice as he repeated his old saw: "But, gentlemen, you must bear in mind, the science of surgery has been founded on conjecture and improved by murder."

"I have *dared* in this operation, and daring has won the day!"

* * * * *

A year later a man and woman strolled slowly along the sands of Southampton. The man's face bore the marks of a long and severe illness; he was weak and anaemic, and his step was heavy and slow. The woman, sad and careworn, walked listlessly by his side. They stopped to gaze seaward and watch the flight of startled gulls.

Unconsciously, the woman began tracing a name on the wet sand with the sunshade she carried.

The man looked down and saw the name.

"Humph!" he grunted with a vile oath, "if I run across that bloody surgeon again I'll gouge out his other eye!"



LA VAGUE.

AN EPISODE OF THE SOUDAN.

“Nor deem the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If rising on its wrecks, at last,
To something nobler we attain.”

IT is within an hour of sunset. Throughout the sultry afternoon heavy firing has been heard; but now the shots are desultory, save when a machine gun rattles off a volley.

The enemy has been engaged above the Third Cataract, and the action has been bloody and desperate.

The field-hospital tent on the left bank of the Nile is full; the wounded are being transferred to the dahabeahs and launches about taking their departure for the fort at Wady Halfa.

A dense tropical vegetation of tangled undergrowth surrounds the clearing where the tents have been pitched.

The mist rising from the river, where the masts of the dahabeahs tremble midst the tall palms, throws a gauzy veil over the dim perspective of sandy desert lying beyond.

The open tent-flaps reveal two men seated near a clumsily constructed operating table on which surgical instruments are strewn.

“You’ll have some more, Gaunt, I’m afraid; the last runner in reported two officers badly wounded.”

The surgeon dips a fresh lot of lint into the bowl of antiseptic before him.

“I wish the present batch had been sent down to ‘Halfa an hour ago. If forced to take to the boats there will not be room for all.”

An orderly enters from the rear tent.

"The sister says Bellings, of the Forty-first, is dying. What orders for the body, sir?"

"Bury here—and deep," growls Gaunt, "down by the river. These hellhounds of fanatics dig like desert jackals for our dead."

The orderly salutes and turns on his heel.

Ensign Vavasour, of the naval brigade, who has charge of the flotilla, eyes Gaunt curiously.

"I say, Gaunt, what an uncanny woman the sister is ! What's her history?"

Gaunt busies himself with a long roll of bandage.

"Yes," he replies, meditatively, "like most of them, she has a history. Her facial disfigurement prompts your query, I suppose? It is the old story of a life that was sweet so long as the good minute lasted. I heard part of it in Cairo from a man who had known her in Paris in the days of 'La Mabilie. La Vague was the queen of her world then. A young Englishman of good family and excellent prospects met the siren, became infatuated, and finally married her. For this wild act he was disinherited. Soon tiring of her, he threw her over. Maddened by his treatment, she sought revenge and attempted to disfigure him for life by throwing vitriol in his face, but in the struggle got the contents of the vial herself.

"Beauty, her sole stock in trade, was gone. Some doctor who had known her in her palmy days took pity on her and got her a position in one of the wards of St. Antoine. Displaying a natural aptitude, she soon qualified as a surgical nurse. Finally she drifted over to Alexandria and then went to Cairo, where the Khedive had her in attendance on his harem's inmates, I understand. About the commencement of the trouble she came to me and applied for the position of government nurse. I put her through her paces and found her clever; since then she has stuck to the army hospital corps. A woman's light hand is comforting to a poor devil when he's hard hit; besides, she's got the nerve of a man at an operation.

"There was another man," adds the surgeon after a short pause, "an old lover, I think, who had something to do with the row between husband

and wife. Gillespie says he brought all the trouble about. She's a queer study. When a woman of her class takes a turn she seems to experience a complete moral change; tries to grow wings, in fact. She evidently embraced this sort of life as an expiation of the past, a medium through which to work her redemption; a religious craze of the sisterhood variety!" and Gaunt chuckles to himself.

"And woman's love is a bitter fruit; and, however he bite it or sip,
There's many a man has lived to curse the taste of that fruit on his lip!"

quotes Vavasour, with a laugh. "But here she comes in the flesh. Gaunt, that face of hers gives me the creeps. I'm going to take a look at the boat;" and the young ensign hurries away.

A tall, swarthy-looking woman, with large, mournful black eyes, stands by the surgeon's side, gazing wistfully out into the gathering twilight.

The right side of her face is hideously scarred, as if by some strong acid, but her perfect profile is most beautiful. She is clothed in black serge, with the red cross of the service on her arm, and there are suspicious dull-red patches on the worn gown.

"They are bringing two wounded officers down, sister. Is there room beyond, or shall you want the cot here?"

"I had better prepare one here," she replies, as she silently sets to work.

"We may be forced to fall back to-night," continues Gaunt; "the news from above is not encouraging, and our position is a dangerous one. Be in readiness for a hasty departure;" and he hurries away with his lint and bandages.

The woman leans wearily against the table and a sigh escapes her lips.

"There is fatality in the air to-night—a presentiment of coming disaster!" A half-stifled groan from the adjoining tent arouses her. "One has died with the day; another dies with the dawn. Their chances are poor in this fever-stricken land!"

Men are landing from a launch; the footsteps of a squad of four are heard.

They are bearing a body on a litter. A sergeant supporting the bleeding figure of a colonel of the Royal Engineers brings up in the rear. La Vague peers through the gloom.

"The wounded officers!" she exclaims, holding the tent-flap aside for them to enter. They lay the blood-and-dirt-begrimed form on the cot, and the feeble lantern rays reveal the distorted features of the man before her.

La Vague starts as if struck.

"A pretty bad case, nurse," says the sergeant. "Machine gun bust—four killed—Captain Cooper's still alive, I think."

The colonel of engineers has sunk in a confused heap on a camp stool, oblivious to all.

The woman bends over the dying captain, sponging away the mud and sand from the bloody head.

"God be kind!" she prays. "Is it thus, after many years, I am brought face to face with him—to see him die?"

Gaunt comes in carelessly wiping his instruments on his sleeve.

"Any work for me, sister?"

She motions him away.

"His eyes are destroyed," she whispers, in horror-stricken tones. "You can do nothing—but hasten death."

Gaunt is attending the colonel, binding up a badly cut arm and head.

"Are we holding our own?" he asks.

"No; the black devils are being re-enforced hourly. We shall retreat as soon as darkness sets in. Cooper is a goner, I fear," nodding to where the nurse kneels. "Can you get him down to 'Halfa alive? He's got a wife in the garrison there!"

"I'm afraid not," says Gaunt. "But come this way, colonel;" and the men start for the rear tent.

La Vague has arisen to her feet.

The colonel is about to pass her when the tell-tale scar meets his gaze.

"Clarisse!"

The woman turns ghastly white, and a look of hatred illumines her tear-bedimmed eyes.

"Clarisse !" he again exclaims.

"My God ! Surgeon, where did this woman come from ?"

"This is not a time nor place to ask for explanations, colonel," replies Gaunt, quietly. "We are dealing with questions of life and death. Come with me ;" and he urges the man into the adjoining tent.

La Vague stands as if transfixed. There is a demoniacal expression on her face, but it fades away as suddenly to give place to one of extreme tenderness as she moistens the sufferer's lips.

"His wife at 'Halfa, and I by his side to administer to his dying wants! No, no, not dying—for he must not die ! Cecil, Cecil, speak to me—only speak to me once again; tell me that you forgive me ! Do not leave me, now that I have found you, love Holy Mother of Christ, grant me my prayer ! Spare this life, and take mine in all its worthlessness !"

Both of her arms are thrown around him; her braided hair, escaped from the cap she wears, lies matted in his blood.

"His wife at 'Halfa !" she mutters "Have I no other claim upon this man but that which the red cross gives me ? And his dumb cry is but that of all humanity !"

"Rose," whispers the dying man.—"Rose, darling, come nearer." She bends forward to catch his words, and her strong frame trembles. "We were to be so happy, Rose, back in dear old England, when the campaign was over ! And now, Rose, all will be different. I am going far away, across the desert. It will be a long march, darling, and the fighting hard." A clot in the throat chokes his utterance.

La Vague is crying—the first tears the woman has shed in many years.

"His wife at 'Halfa" seems an angel to her at *that* moment.

La Vague has never been taught a prayer, but in her attitude there is an invocation to the Almighty.

Outside the hurrying of men betokens approaching danger. An occasional shot or two in the far distance tells of the struggle still going on, the retreat being covered by a small field battery and a handful of the Forty-first Foot.

The wounded in the next tent are being carried to the boats.

The bandaged and bedraggled figure of the colonel stands beside La Vague.

"We have met to bear witness to this dying man's last cry for a love pure and sweet—which you cannot give him."

"Leave us!" she cries. "You destroyed his happiness in life; you shall not mar the peace of his death. You have come to triumph over me in the hour of my final desolation, to try and make bitter my last thoughts of him. Leave us! He is mine—if not in the eyes of Heaven, then by the right of the red cross I wear!"

"But you must save him for the woman at 'Halfa, who bears his name!" sneers the colonel. Then, passionately: "Ah, Clarisse, at such a time as this forget the past! You wrong me when you think me your enemy. I have always loved you, but never more than I do now."

"Go, I tell you! Your presence is a profanation!"

The colonel smiles sardonically.

"What is one man's death when it stares us all in the face? Life for the living, rest for the dead."

Gaunt enters at this moment.

"The last boat is waiting; there is just room for two. We can't take any of our dead with us. Hurry, both of you; there is not a moment to be lost. Sister, Sergeant Grey will have charge of the launch; his orders are to place you out of harm's way. There will be a sharp rifle fire turning the bend below."

La Vague eyed him calmly.

"I cannot leave this man—he still lives!"

"What! Are you mad?"

"There is a woman at 'Halfa who would do likewise," she answers.

"But she is his wife."

"And I—*was*!"

"Take your place in the boat, or we shall carry you there by force!" cries Gaunt, angrily.

"You shall not! My life is my own, and my duty by this man's side till life has fled."

Gaunt springs forward to carry out his threat. La Vague steps back a pace and picks up a surgical knife.

"At your peril!" she cries.

"Let her willfulness be her death! Come quick, colonel!" and the two were gone.

La Vague creeps closer to her charge.

"Death is sweeter by *your* side," she murmurs. Silence reigns for many minutes, then firing is heard below. "They have escaped!" she cries, joyfully.

The sound of some one approaching the tent brings La Vague to her feet.

It is the colonel.

Breathless, with cocked revolver in his uninjured hand, he implores her to fly.

"There is still a chance left you. Hidden near by is a caique; in it we may float down the stream unperceived. Come, Clarisse, for the love of God, come; I beseech you!"

"I have given my answer—save yourself."

"Without you, Clarisse, life will be nothing to me."

"Bah! hush such silly talk!" she laughs, bitterly.

"Clarisse, I can offer you all that a woman can wish for—life, honor, position. In England, as my wife, who will dare speak a word of the past? Come, for I love you as of old—desperately, passionately, unreasoningly. Every moment is most precious—even now we may be surrounded."

La Vague looks at him coldly.

"You say those words to me," she says slowly—"to me, La Vague, whom men have called 'Nothing'! To me, La Vague, the by-word of the army! As my life has been without beauty, so would yours, as a soldier, be without honor. Leave me; I am not afraid to die."

"It means a fate worse than death to be taken by these dervishes. Come, I implore you, or it will be too late!"

"No, I say!" and her voice rings clear and loud—no, and tell them my last words were contempt for those who deserted a dying soldier; tell

her of 'Halfa—who claims this man as wife—that one who loved him more than life died by his side."

A look of deadly hatred sweeps over the colonel's face.

"By God, I'll kill him where he lies! You will watch by a dead, not a living, lover."

He raises his weapon. With a bound *La Vague* is upon him; the keen scalpel flashes in the moonlight and descends with lightning force into the would-be murderer's heart. She drops the dripping instrument, and falls across Cecil on the cot.

"Will they never come!"

The full Eastern moon shines in through the open tent, bathing all in a white, shroud-like light.

She detects a slight sound.

"Rose, Rose—good-by, Rose, dar——"

. Then all was still.

MISS SANTA CLAUS.

“**S**UPE No. 6” was the title by which the stage manager designated him when he cursed him for his unwieldy movements in the manœuvres of the grand march. “John Collins” was the name called when “the ghost walked” of a Saturday night and the pay-roll of the big spectacular extravaganza was gone over and the waiting supernumeraries were doled out their week’s wage.

Fifty cents a night for appearing as one of a Roman army or mob and wearing casque and buskin or flowing toga, is little enough. But then a man’s pride doesn’t suffer; he’s in the “legitimate,” and that lends a certain amount of dignity to the position of “supe,” especially when the “sup ” feels that he is *supporting* some great Shakspearean “star.”

But fifty cents a night for making a spectacle of himself as a Nubian or red imp of the infernal regions is not compatible with a middle-aged actor’s self-respect, however broken down he may be.

John Collins had seen better days, but, unlike the majority of such persons, he did not harp on past glories and bore one with “tales of himself.” He took life as it came—bravely, manfully—and stood up against Fate with the dogged persistence of one who realized what it was to have a wife and little one dependent upon him for their daily bread.

With increasing years and added avoirdupois John had become less light on his feet—and it was as a “knockabout comedian” that John Collins had gained his laurels.

Bad business, coupled with an illness that had crippled him both physically and financially, had forced John to take anything in the way of an engagement, and four dollars a week (inclusive of matinées) went a long way toward paying the rent and buying coal and food for his modest home. A few extra dollars were to be picked up by doing little



odds and ends of work on "team sketches" that needed "revision" or "padding," his fellow-Thespians of the variety stage appreciating John's judgment in these matters.

It was the night before Christmas and the house was packed.

The curtain had fallen on the first act of "The Land of Gold" and was rising again in response to a tumultuous demand from the delighted audience. When the tableau had been admired for a second time and the "drop" lowered on the scene, the irate stage manager rushed up to "Supe No. 6."

"Blankety blank!!" said the stage manager, "blankety blank!!!"

John knew what was coming and leaned wearily against one of the wings. He was desperately tired and ill that evening; his old enemy, rheumatism, had him in its clutches again, and it had been all he could do to hobble around the big stage.

"D——n you, No. 6, you spoiled the whole effect of that last figure. I'd fine you heavily, if you were worth it; as it is, you're no earthly good. Get off the stage—you're discharged!" Poor old John crept off into the wings. He was so humiliated, disheartened, and demoralized by the fierce attack of the brute that he could not restrain the tears that welled up in his eyes and slowly trickled down his greasy "make up."

"My God!" he muttered, "men used to have some feeling in the old days. I wouldn't treat a dog the way that man treats me. To think," he sighed, sinking down on a pile of "props," "it's Christmas eve and nothing but bad news to take home to Annie and the kid. John Collins, luck's against you. Oh, it's too bad, it's too bad; I couldn't afford to lose this." And the old actor buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud, deaf to the hurrying chorus and shouting stage hands around him.

"What's the matter—are you ill?—shall I send for a doctor?"

John looked up in surprise.

It was the "star" chorus girl—the bright, *particular* "star" chorus girl—who spoke; she who rivalled the leading actress of the extravaganza in the attention she commanded—*Miss Flossie L'Amour*, as the programme read and the chappies lisped.

John—with all an old-timer's aversion to the new-fangled, bespangled

creation of paint, powder, and peroxide called "an actress"—had conceived an intense dislike for this particular girl. She appeared to him so light and heartless, so vain and foolish, that, in picking up one of the numerous floral tributes hurled her from a proscenium box one night, he had felt constrained to pity the fate of the beautiful roses, wasting their fragrance on what seemed to him so unworthy a recipient. Now she stood before him in all the pride of success and glowing youth. She could well afford to be charitable and friendly to a poor old man; success makes one so patronizing and kindly disposed.

"What's the matter?" she demanded. "Then to a passing call-boy: 'Tell my friend I'll be with him in another minute!'" "Don't trouble yourself about me, my dear," said John; "it's nothing. I've been discharged; that's all. It comes rather hard, though, for a man of my years and experience to be insulted before all you people."

"Yes," cried the girl angrily, "I heard that brute of a Cadger curse you. You'd have been justified in punching his head. I hate the man. He don't dare say a word to me—I'm too popular. It's only on you poor supes he vents his spleen. Come, old fellow, tell me, can't I do something for you? I'll say a word in your favor and try to have you taken back."

John stared at her in amazement. Flossie L'Amour wasn't such a bad lot after all. Why should she take any interest in a poor old supe?

"I'm afraid you can't do anything for me," he sadly replied. "I'm going home now. Thank you for your kindness—and a merry Christmas!"

"A merry, merry Christmas!" she called after him as he went downstairs to don his street clothes. "Cheer up, old fellow; it may be a merry one after all!"

The little sitting-room of the small top-story flat over on Seventh avenue held a sorrowful group an hour later.

"I'm glad the kid's asleep, Annie," said John, breaking the silence after a long pause. "I see she's hung her stocking, poor child! If it hadn't been for Cadger's spite I might have got what's due me, to-night, and bought the doll she wants so much. We'll have to celebrate to-morrow evening; I'll get the money in the morning. We must tell her Santa Claus sent word he couldn't come before."

"Don't be downcast, John," replied his wife; "if it comes to the worst I can do a turn yet—it's been the child that has kept me off the boards. You must stay home now and keep house, and let me do my share of the work."

"Ah, Annie, you're willing enough, my dear, but I can't let you yet awhile."

"Hush!" whispered his wife. "Oh, you've waked her," she added, as a curly head peered over the side of the crib.

"Is Santa Claus come yet?" asked a child's voice.

"Santa Claus never comes when little girls are awake; you'll have to go to sleep again, Daisy," answered the mother.

"When you are sound, sound asleep, he'll come driving over the roof in his sleigh, and when he comes down the chimney and sees that your eyes are closed, and knows that you can't possibly see him, why, he'll put something nice in that big stocking of yours. He may come to-night, dear, or he may wait till to-morrow; but he'll surely come, he'll surely come. So, go to sleep, like a good little girl—the kind Santa Claus loves to give his presents to."

The tired eyes drooped, a hopeful little voice murmured "Good night," and the curly head fell back on the pillow.

"Bless her trusting little heart!" said John hoarsely; "bless her heart! She's you and you over again, Annie."

"It's past midnight, John," said the woman; "time all good people were in bed. Too bad we haven't the price of some supper and your Christmas bottle of ale. But never mind, man; we can go to bed with clear consciences and the knowledge that the rent's paid for this month."

There was a sharp knock at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded John, crossing the room.

"Miss Santa Claus," called a familiar voice; "Miss Santa Claus and an angel. Open up!"

The lamplight fell on the faces of *Miss Flossie L' Amour* and a beardless, cigarette-puffing youth. The youth wore an opera hat and an opera cape-coat. His white-gloved hands encircled the bottom package that formed

the base of a pyramid of packages and bundles that extended to the top of his high collar, over which his cigarette burned as a beacon light.

Miss Flossie's fur-lined cloak, too, bulged out with packages which she carried beneath its ample folds.

"Well, we've arrived!" she gasped, "and that last flight of stairs was no dream, I can tell you."

John and his wife were too dumfounded to say a word, but the awakened child found *her* voice.

"O mamma, I didn't know Santa Claus was a woman," the little girl cried.

"O you darling!" exclaimed Flossie, dropping her bundles and rushing over to the crib. "Yes, Santa Claus is a woman. I'm Miss Santa Claus, and you'll soon see what I've brought you."

"How did you find me out—find out where I lived?" stammered John Collins. "I, a perfect stranger to you, Miss L'Amour. I don't—"

"Your name's John Collins, isn't it?" demanded Flossie, abruptly.

"Yes," answered John, proudly.

"And my real name is Maggie Sheridan—Billy Sheridan's daughter, the man who did a turn with you some twenty years ago, your old side-partner. I didn't know you as 'Supe No. 6,' but when one of the old stage hands told me your history I remembered my father's friend and partner. You did him a good trick once, and that's what I'm here for to-night—to pay you back."

"And so you're little Maggie," repeated John, taking the young woman's hands in his and looking earnestly in her eyes. "I remember you as a child. Your father died when you were about twelve years old. But how you've changed! Why, my dear, you never gave promise of such beauty."

The tenants below must have thought pandemonium had been let loose. It was a most uproarious supper (for that had been brought in a hamper also) that night, all were so happy. Before sitting down Flossie had improvised a Christmas tree out of the broom (the evergreen tree had been overlooked in her hurried shopping tour along Sixth avenue), and the little girl's eyes fairly glistened as Flossie tied doll after doll and toy after

toy around it, the old broom swaying to and fro in the half-filled coal bucket into which the youth had stuck its handle. There were a shawl and a dress for Mrs. Collins, and a warm winter overcoat for John ; there were gloves and neckerchiefs, tobacco and pipes, and a handsome pocket-book, which "Cholly" had thoughtfully lined with a few bills.

"You're an angel," said Mrs. Collins, kissing Flossie, as they rose from the table.

"I'm not an angel," replied Flossie, pouring out another glass of Bass for the frail little woman.

"*'There's an angel !'*" And she pointed to her companion, who was lighting his twenty-sixth cigarette. "He's going to back me in a venture of mine, and he's a dear. I have a proposition to make you, John," she said. "I take the road in four weeks' time. My 'angel' here has bought the rights to a new English burlesque with an easy 'fat' part in it for me. I want a manager ; are you with us, old man ?"

John grasped her hand and tears filled his eyes again—tears of gratitude, as he realized all her offer meant.

"God bless you, Maggie !" he cried ; "you've made this the happiest Christmas of our lives."

"Here, too," she replied ; "for of all parts I've ever played, I think I like *Miss Santa Claus* the best. And I'll tell you why," she added, with a laugh : "there wasn't any '*frost*' and the house was with me from the word 'go'—eh, Cholly ?"

"Yaas," drawled Cholly, as he lit a fresh cigarette.



JOCKEY ATKINS.

THE winter books laid odds of 30 to 1 against Danger, but as Spring advanced the odds were shaded until 10 to 1 was about the best placing of a bet on the Seabright stable's crackajack. Danger was the property of Con Cassidy, the bookmaker, who ran him under the Seabright red and green, and when Cassidy backed a thing his brother bookies generally bleached. Although weights had not been declared or jockeys named the talent had voted Danger a dead sure thing of the lead-pipe cinch order; and when the public heard that Atkins—"Slippery" Atkins—had been engaged to ride, it pinned its faith on the horse and made him a red-hot favorite. The handicap was just six weeks off when I, with a string of yearlings to get into shape for their summer engagements, came East and got down to steady work. I hadn't been established in my quarters more than an hour when Atkins came in to say "how-de-do." He was dressed for town and looked swagger enough to fill a whole grand stand.

"How are things running?" I asked. "Hear you've got a girl in the lead!"

"My word, yes!" he sighed, "but I'm afride I'm going to run unplyced."

Atkins spoke a rich "rycy Austylian" English—picked up at the Melbourne courses.

"What's the matter?" I inquired.

"Oh, she's like the 'osses," he replied—"a bit uncerting, don't ye kneow. I want 'er to mairy me and she saiy, 'Win the 'andicap on Dynger and I am yours'—that's what she saiy," and Atkins chewed a wisp of straw meditatively.

"She's all right," replied Atkins, "she's running strite enough neow,

and she means honest by me as I mean honest by 'er. But things is un-cer-tin in this world—the 'andicap's a big ryce. The boy they put up for hexercise is spoiling Dynger's timeper," he added, as his colored valet drove up to take him to the station. "I must taik 'im in 'and myself in a day or tew."

I went to town that evening to hunt up Petler, Flyaway and Floss's old trainer, and finally ran him down in the small hours of the morning in a restaurant frequented by the sporting element. At an adjoining table sat Atkins and a stunning woman, one of the best lookers and actors I've ever seen.

I didn't like the whole of her build, though ; there wasn't the honest, straightforward look of the thoroughbred about her ; there was a bad strain somewhere, a something that no breeding could obliterate—and I'm talking about her heart when I say that.

"Who is she, Petler?" I whispered.

"I don't know her name," said Petler, "but I've often seen her down at the track with some big swell for her main guy. She's no selling plater, I'll lay you."

"Such women spoil good jocks, Petler. A man may be able to ride like greased lightning, but he can't keep up the pace they set."

"I mind my own business," growled Petler. "Atkins has a wine income ; I drink my Bass and says nothin'."

I didn't see Atkins again for three weeks, and then when I—but that's making the running, and it must come in at the finish of my story.

All speed trials before a big race are kept very quiet and run at early dawn, when none but trainers and trusted stable hands are present. It takes a pretty fly spy and a flier split second chronometer, to get the correct time when a stable wants a performance *sub rosa*.

I heard that the Seabright people were shrouding all of Danger's early morning work in mystery, and that Atkins had gone somewhere South for his health, there being grave doubt as to whether he would be able to ride.

It was also rumored that Con Cassidy was hedging of a sudden. There was a bad smash-up on the Long Island Railroad just about the

15th, and my assistant, Jim Casey, was one of the many injured, so I was kept close to my stable and had few opportunities to learn what was really transpiring.

All the gossip I heard had to be taken with a gigantic grain of salt; it emanated from the bookies to influence the betting. I felt so sure of Danger with Atkins up that I had placed some \$2,000 on the horse.

Great was my surprise to learn, a few days later, that the Valley Club, a new firm of bookmakers, was offering as high as 20 to 1 against the favorite. The best I'd been able to do was 4 to 1, some of my money being placed at 2½.

The knowing ones fought shy of the Valley Club, whispering a warning "welsh," but the club kept on offering the odds and taking in the talent's dollars.

Some people said Con Cassidy was back of the club and that the race was already fixed; but I, for one, couldn't believe any such thing; with Atkins up the devil couldn't pull the horse.

I knew Atkins for an honest jock, that he was riding for a bride—a woman's love; and I knew, furthermore, that *he could ride Danger to win!* Atkins had the Australian trick of "lifting" to perfection, and when Con Cassidy engaged him it was with the full knowledge of the jockey's ability to handle the animal.

Danger was a mean, vicious brute of varying moods, and a predilection to play his rider at the first quarter.

Meeting Cassidy, I inquired after the jockey.

"I've sent him South for ten days. He was run down and needed building up. When weights and names are posted he'll be on hand, at the top weight, too."

"Danger's penalty, eh?"

"Got any more money that says Danger?" asked Cassidy, banteringly.

"Mr. Cassidy," I replied, "if Atkins is in the saddle when the bell rings, it's as certain as death he'll win the Handicap."

I didn't feel comfortable, however, and made a mental resolve to wire Atkins for information.

"What's Atkins' address, Mr. Cassidy?"

"That's a stable secret," he answered, with a laugh, and walked away.

Word came from the Long Island City Hospital that Casey was very low and wanted to see me. I boarded the first train that came along.

On leaving the ward where I found him I passed through a hallway, at the end of which, near the head of a staircase, was a pay patient's room.

The door of the room was half-open—and the sound of a very familiar voice arrested my footsteps.

The voice was very faint and low, very much changed, but there was no mistaking the accent; it was the "rycy Austrlyian" of Jockey Atkins.

"Why 'ave you been so long away?' he was saying. "And neow that you are 'ere you only arsk about the 'osses. 'Ave you tired of me so soon?"

"Oh, you know I just dote on you, Charlie" replied a woman's voice in soft, purring tones. "I love my little jock. I've been awfully busy, or I'd have come oftener. You are getting along all right, aren't you, dearie? What does the doctor say?"

"It's only a bit of fever," feebly answered Atkins; "tew mainy Turkish barths, tew quick reducing brought me deown. I'll feel like a tew-year old the daiy of the ryce."

"Then it is really nothing serious!" she exclaimed joyfully, "and you'll be able to ride Danger?"

"Remember, Charlie, I've got my last red up on the race. I've sold and pawned all the diamonds you gave me, and borrowed right and left to pay it.

"You'll *surely* be in the saddle, won't you, Charlie?" she asked with desperation in her intonation.

"My word, yes!" sighed Atkins, wearily. "I'll be in the saddle, never fear. But you must keep my being 'ere a secret," he said warningly. "I'm hentered 'ere as John Smith; no one but you and Cassidy knows where I am. They think I've broken contract with 'im; it's all done tew get a better price on the 'oss. But, my word! I'll be in the

paddock when the saddlin'-bell rings. Taike all the money you can lie your 'ands on and ply it against the brute!"

I could hardly credit my ears. What did Atkins mean?

"I'll come again soon, dearie," the woman said, moving toward the door.

"Don't come again!" exclaimed Atkins; "don't come again," he repeated in sad and hopeless tones; "you may be—watched, ye kneow.

"Wait till we meet again at the track, after the ryce, when the thing is pulled off and I can call you me own."

I moved back into the shadow as the woman passed out.

It was the girl Petler and I saw in the restaurant with the jockey.

"My word!" gasped Atkins in surprise when I entered the room, "'ow did you find me hout?"

"I have found you out in more ways than one, Atkins," I sternly said; "you are going to pull a horse, and the horse is Danger—the public's favorite."

Atkins' great dark eyes sought mine; they were full of helplessness and hopelessness.

I had seen the same look in a thoroughbred's just before firing the shot that ended the poor maimed brute's agony.

"Cooper," he moaned, "I was—I was going to pull 'im, but neow I pray Gawd 'e'll win—win by a good four lengths."

"What do you mean?" I asked in astonishment.

"Listeu," said Atkins in broken tones, "listen, and I'll tell you, Cooper. When I larst saw you I lied to you, but neow I'm telling you strite running truth. I told you abeout a woman what had promised to mairy me if I won the 'andicap on Dynger—but it wasn't tew win, it was to lose the ryce, Cooper—to *lose* the ryce. It was a blind I threw you and the rest, old pal, but the woman that was in 'ere a moment ago—curse 'er tricky black 'art—got one, tew, just neow.

"I told her to keep on plying against Dynger, as she and 'er bloody lover 'ave been doing for weeks parst.

"I've found out what she really is and what she's been plying me for—tew maike her fine gentleman lover rich again and put im back on 'is feet.

"'E's the Walley Club, damn 'im, that's what 'e is.

"Murphy found hout heverything for me.

"Thaink Gawd, I knew it all in time to deceive 'im and 'er."

"Then you'll ride to win, Atkins?"

"Ride! Ride to win, Cooper!" he repeated sadly.

"No; Murphy will 'ave the mount on Dynger; my riding daisys are over. I'm off the track for good."

"Oh, nonsense, Atkins," said I; "nobody will be the wiser for your indiscretion." All's well that ends well. 'Never let a woman get such a hold on you again, my boy.

"If you're strong enough you *must* ride Danger."

Atkins gave me a quizzical look; he had a queer sense of humor, Atkins had.

"I'll tell you what, Cooper; if *you* think, I'm in good enough condition I *will* ride Dynger. Just pull hup the bed clothes from the foot of the bed and see if my legs are as firm as hever. I'll need steel legs to lift Dynger," he added, a grim smile playing about his wan and sunken features as he closed his eyes and turned his face toward the wall. To humor him I put my hand under the sheet.

"What have you done with your legs, Atkins?" I laughingly asked, thinking the joke good. Atkins laughed too—a queer, uncanny, horrid laugh, full of bitterness, hate and despair, so hopeless and harrowing that I stood palsied, gazing at him with horror-stricken eyes.

"What 'ave I done with my legs?" he sobbed hysterically. "Arsk the bloody surgeons what 'ad me on the hoperating table after the railway haccident. They'll tell you it was compound fracture of both femur, and a double hamputation!"

* * * * *

They told me at the hospital that Atkins died at fifteen minutes past four on the afternoon of the 30th.

Danger passed under the wire, a winner by four lengths, at 4.14 P. M., doing the distance in 2.05¼, as timed by my stop-watch.

Jockey Atkins must have done some powerful praying—a powerful lot of praying, poor boy!

A PAIR OF BOOTS.

A FARCE IN THREE SCENES.

Characters.

MR. CUTAWAY CROSS . . . *A Cross-country Rider and Polo Crack.*

MR. RICHARD HARTLEY . *His Friend.*

JENKINS *Cross's Valet.*

"BOOTS" *At Grandview Hotel.*

"BOOTS" *At Tavistock Inn.*

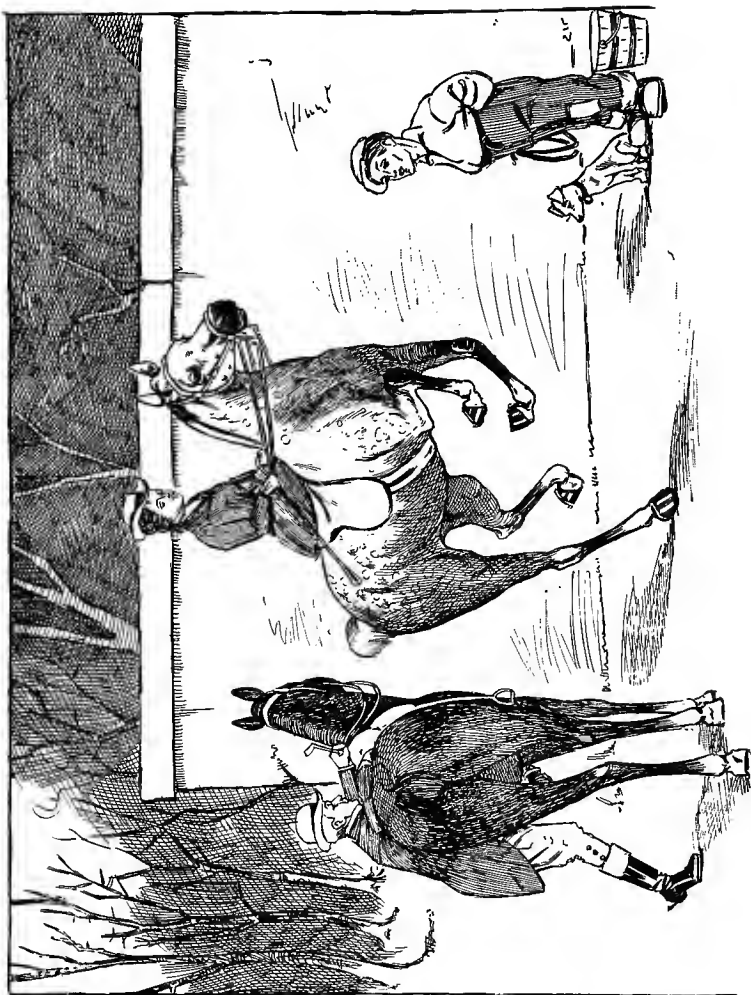
MR. GEORGE DUVAL }
MISS BESSIE VENTNOR } . . *Elopers.*

SCENE I.—*Cutaway Cross is discovered in his room at the Grandview Hotel at 6 A. M. He opens the door into the corridor and the light illumines the gloomy hall-way, disclosing boots and shoes outside the different rooms—boots of high and low degree, all brightly polished, awaiting their respective owners. He picks up the pair before his door.*

[In examining the boots he reverses one, and a half-sheet of note-paper flutters to the floor.]

Cross. *[Angrily.]* These are not mine! What the devil's the matter with Boots this morning! Confound that stupid man of mine. Why isn't he up to rectify mistakes?

Hello! What's this?—a *billet doux*! Well, well; let's see what's in it. *[He picks it up and reads aloud.]* "My darling George." (Ha, ha! not bad for a starter!) "Papa is still obdurate. He says I must never see you again." (Hard lines, little girl—jolly hard lines.) "We leave here this afternoon—to part, perhaps forever." (Terrible, terrible, "to part forever"—fancy!)



"I write these few lines in great haste, hoping to be able to drop this note in one of your riding-boots before they are carried to your room.

"I am now waiting for you on the piazza. Rufus is saddled, and I have given orders that your horse be brought up.

Let us fly together. Over the State line some good, kind, obliging clergyman will unite us forever and eternity.

Your own,

"BESSIE."

Well, I'll be hanged! He's got my boots and I've his. Oh, my mascots! my lucky polos! I hope he doesn't "fly" with them on. Who are the two, I wonder? Let me think a moment. I arrived here late last night; entering the hotel, noticed a very spoony pair over in a corner of the piazza. One must have been "darling George;" the other, "your own Bessie." So they're about eloping, eh? Well, let 'em, for all I care—but I want my boots, hang it all! I want my boots, and I'm going to have them!

[He jabs the electric push-button viciously. A moment later Boots appears at the door.]

Boots, I've a very good mind to wring your neck! What did I tip you for last night? to bring me the wrong boots in the morning? Get out of here, and send me my man—here wait! bring me a brandy and soda—and, here—come here! Take this note and drop it in one of those patent leather boots I threw at your head. Leave them where they belong, and bring me back my own, a pair of light tan polos. Hurry!

[Exit Boots on a run. Mr. Cross moves gingerly about in his stock-ing feet, his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his baggy riding-breeches. His face wears a half-serious, half-amused look.]

Cross. *[Meditatively.]* I don't know about this. I wonder if it's right in me, aiding and abetting this thing? They're both very young, it seems to me. Perhaps the old man is right; the fellow may be a good-for-nothing scamp, for all I know. She wasn't a bad looking girl—hanged if she was! I didn't have much of a look at her, to tell the

truth, but I'm sure she's a high-stepper, a well-bred 'un. In contour, reminded me a little of old John Ventnor's daughter, Bessie.

I wonder where the Ventnors are this summer? Bessie Ventnor! I shall never forget her; nice girl, nice hair, nice eyes. [*Sighing.*] What could a girl like Bessie see in a man like me? Bah! what the deuce am I thinking about! Hang sentiment! But she was an awfully nice girl. I only met her two or three times; she didn't seem to take to me, I fancied. Let me see—last time I saw her was down at the Farm, two years ago, when she was visiting Floss. Bessie must be about twenty now. Heigho!—Well, I don't want to interfere with these young lovers, but I'm going to have my boots. Then they can start off. As long as all's fair at the post, I don't care for the finish. I drop the flag in exchange for my boots. "Darling George" must leave me my—

[*Boots stands in the doorway.*]

Boots. Beg pardon, sir, but them boots of yours is gone. Here's your note, sir.

Cross. [*Wildly.*] My boots gone! How dare you tell me that? Do you mean to say that he can wear my boots? Gad, he must be a gentleman, if his feet are as small as all that! Here, give me his boots; I'm going after those boots of mine. [*Exit Boots.*]

[*Mr. Cross sits down on an unpacked trunk, fuming and fretting, puffing and panting, as he madly pulls at the boot straps. A timid knock is heard on the half-open door.*]

Cross. [*Vociferously.*] Come in!!!!—Jenkins! You lazy, good-for-nothing hound! What do you mean by oversleeping? The next time it happens, I'll discharge you, do you hear? Where are my polos, my mascots, my lucky boots? Gone!—yes, gone! You know how much I prize those boots. What are you staring that way for, you idiot? Run down to the stable and order Bess under a racing saddle. I've got to ride after those boots. Move!

[*Exit Jenkins like a flash, followed by a gate stick that narrowly misses his head.*]

I wish I had never come to this hotel; but it was too late to get my traps over to the club-house. Most disgustingly democratic, this hotel life; beastly! I'll wager the guests have used my mare and the ponies during the night. Nice kind of people here! Nice kind of a chap to take a man's boots! Phew! I wish my others were unpacked—ouch!—these hurt my corns. He has an awfully small foot—the impudent puppy! I've a good mind to pull him, boots and body, off his horse, the beggar; but as there's a lady in the case, I'll have to be polite and use diplomacy. They'll think me crazy, riding after a pair of boots. But they don't know what mascots they are; I never lost a game in them. Will that lazy dog ever have Bess ready?

[Mr. Cross limps painfully over to the window that opens on the driveway and commands a view of the mounting-block. A young man, wearing a pair of yellow boots, is assisting a young woman to mount with one hand, while he holds the bridle-reins of the two horses with the other. The girl's profile only is seen, but, as she springs into the saddle, her full face is revealed to Mr. Cross.]

Cross *[Staggering back from the window.]* My good Heavens! Bessie Ventnor!!

[He sinks in a heap on the bed. There is utter silence in the room for several minutes. He comes to himself with a start as a sharp rap is heard on the door.]

Jenkins. The mare has been ready for the last ten minutes, sir.

Cross. *[In a subdued voice, very gently and kindly.]* Never mind, Jenkins; I'm sorry to have troubled you. Take her back to the stable—I've found my boots.

[SCENE II.—The Tavistock Inn. Time, midnight. The only light about the place is in the hands of Boots, who, lantern in hand, sits in the office awaiting the arrival of the 12.15 train. He yawns and helps himself out of a pocket-flask.]

Boots. Them two in 8 must be bridals! Gee, wot a muddy lot they wos when they got here! Lor', but didn't they shop after dinner,

a buyin' trunks an' clo'es an' portmanters? Them was dandy boots he give me to polish.

Says he, "Be mighty pertickler of them boots. I want 'em cleaned well," says he; "for I'm goin' to have 'em boxed up and expressed."

Them swells is peculiar; the idear of expressin' yer boots! Who ever heard of it?

That job will be wuth a dollar. He worried me so about them boots that I did 'em this evenin'.

But yer didn't ketch me knockin' when I left 'em at the door—not on yer life!

Bridals don't tip yer for knockin'.

[A whir of wheels is heard on the gravel driveway; the snort and stamp of a suddenly arrested horse; the sound of falling luggage.]

A Voice. Hi, Jimmie!

[Boots shuffles out with his lantern, to be confronted by a tall gentleman clad in a traveling ulster.]

A Voice. The gentleman wants to ketch the 6.30 in the morning. Yer better put it down.

[Boots grabs the portmanteau, and leads the way upstairs. He opens the door of a room and lights the candles.]

Hartley [*shivering.*] Is there any hot water at this hour of the night?

Boots. No, sir; but I can boil yer some.

Hartley. All right, my boy; a small pitcher will do—and some sugar and lemons, please. I've an awful chill, br-r-r-r-r-h!!!

[Boots disappears down the stairway. Mr. Hartley paces up and down the dimly-lighted corridor, slapping his chest, coachman fashion.]

Hartley. B-r-r-r-r-r-r-h!!!

[He spics a pair of boots.]

Whose boots, I wonder?

I had no idea they played polo here—b-r-r-r-r-r-h!!

Nice pair of boots—room 8—just opposite mine.

Who's in room 8?—br-r-r-h!

Cut Cross wears such a pair—b-r-r-r-r-h !—I wish that boy would hurry with the hot water and lemons—Cut calls his boots mascots ; never lost a game in them, I believe. He may have ridden—b-r-r-r-r-h ! It's cold to-night !—he may have ridden over from Halcyon.

[Mr. Hartley picks up one of the yellow "polos" and inspects the straps.]

I'm right. These are his famous campaign boots, made out of the hide of the famous bull, Triumph. He's played in these boots at Pau, Cairo, Hurlingham, Calcutta and Newport, and he claims never to have lost a game with them on. Famous boots, guard your sleeping master faithfully ! I wouldn't dare awaken him for worlds. That temper of his is terrible, and he hates to have his rest broken.

[Boots appears with the hot water and lemons.]

Oh, there you are, Boots. Tell me, when did the occupant of number 8 arrive ?

Boots. [Grinning.] There ain't no occupant in there, it's occupants ; there's bridals in there.

Hartley. [Puzzled.] What do you mean ?

Boots. Why, bridals, don't yer know ? That's the bridal suite, an' they act that way, too.

Hartley. [Sternly.] Boy, do you mean to say there is a married couple in there ? That there is a woman in there with the man—the, er, owner of these boots ?

Boots. [Impudently.] Cert. Why shouldn't there be ?

Hartley. [Sadly.] Go. Be sure to call me in time for the early train—the 6.30.

[Boots thumps downstairs. Left alone, Mr. Hartley sadly eyes the boots.]

Oh, Cutaway, you are a sly 'un ! I never thought you'd go off like this. It will be a great surprise to all of your friends.

I have a happy thought : I'll write him a few congratulatory lines. Who can the bride be ? Oh, I know—the Ventnor girl ; the one he was raving about the last time I saw him.

[Mr. Hartley enters his room. He tears a sheet from his betting-book and commences to write by the dim light of the candle on the table.]

“MY DEAR CUT,

“You sly old fox, why didn’t you let me know? I am just off the steamer; landed Tuesday morning. Took the first train for Halcyon, hearing of the old gentleman’s serious illness. Am staying here over-night, as I could not make connection at the junction, and, by accident, have just found out your secret. Felicitate you herewith, old man, as I shall not be able to see you in the morning—I leave on the 6.30. Of course it is Bessie, sweet little Bessie Ventnor; your first, last, and only love, as you once confided to me.

“I wish you no end of happiness, and hope to see you both before many honeymoons have passed.

“Yours in Transit,

“DICK HARTLEY.”

Hartley. [Folding his note.] There, that’s finished! Now, I’ll stick it in this old envelope, and drop it in one of his lucky-boots—he’ll be sure to get it then.

[Mr. Hartley steps out in the corridor, posts his note, and then locks himself in for the night.]

SCENE III.—*Room opening on corridor of The Tavistock Inn. Time 11 A. M. The bright October sun floods the corridor, and beams lovingly upon a pair of yellow riding-boots that stand sentinel-like before the door of the room numbered 8. The door opens and a man stumbles over them.*

Duval. [Petulantly.] I told Boots to box them up.

[He kicks the boots into a corner of the bridal chamber. An envelope falls out of one.]

Mrs. Duval. [Excitedly.] Oh, George, there’s a letter in one—it’s fallen out! How curious! What is it? Do tell me! What a coincidence! Isn’t it funny?

[*Mr. Duval is reading the note, a heavy frown darkening his face.*]

Duval. [*Savagely.*] Who's Cut?

Mrs. Duval. [*Amazed.*] Who's cut? What do you mean, dear?

Duval. [*Furiously.*] Read that! read that!

[*He strikes the paper with his clenched fist.*]

Read that—and then ask me who Cut is. He's the owner of these cursed boots, that's who he is! and I was standing in his boots when I married you yesterday!—the boots of your lover, madam!—of whom you have kept me in ignorance. He's the man that stole my boots, and the note, and he has followed me here to take his revenge in this contemptible manner. I don't know who in thunder Cut is, or what he looks like, but I do know this; he and his boots won't insult me any longer. I'm going to find this Cut; and when I get my hands on him, I'll wring his cut-throat neck, I'll—

[*Exit Mr. Duval in a paroxysm of passion. The bride picks up the paper with trembling fingers and her tears fall on the penciled words.*]

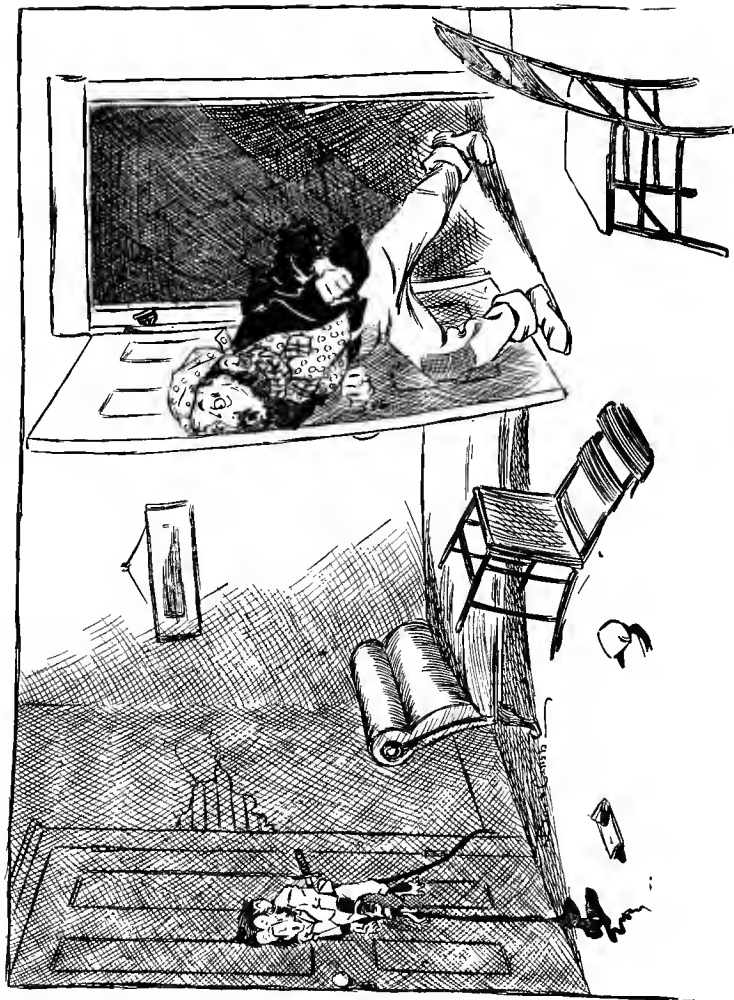
Mrs. Duval. [*Reading.*] “Of course it is Bessie, sweet little Bessie Ventnor, your first, last, and only love, as you once confided to me.”

[*She gives a gasp of amazement, her face assumes a pained expression of bewilderment. She drops the note and runs over to where the boots lie. She picks up one and sees the initials “C. C.” stamped on the straps.*]

Cut! “C.!!” Cutaway Cross!!! I once knew a Cutaway Cross—Floss Cross's brother; I met him at the Farm, an awfully bashful man. Did he—oh, no, impossible! Why didn't he tell me so then, instead of this horrid old Dick Hartley? He loved me—and I never knew it! Oh, your dear precious boots, I'll keep you forever!

[*Her over-wrought feelings find vent in a flood of tears. Sobbing, she clasps the yellow boots close to her heart and throws herself face downward on the bed.*]

CURTAIN.



THE FATE OF GIGI.

DOWN in "the Bend," in Little Italy, she was called "La Picciola" by the swarthy denizens of the *quartier*; the *flaneurs* of Broadway knew her as Thérèse, the little flower girl; but to young Antonio Cappiani, the organ grinder, she was "cara mia Teresina."

Next to his monkey, Gigi, the dearest and sweetest thing in the world to Antonio was his Teresina.

Basta! Giovanni Tassilo, the girl's father, was a Sicilian with blood like lava and a temper—*inferno!* He was a harsh, capricious, insanely jealous *padrone* of a parent.

In the daytime he presided over a push-cart laden with the fruits of the season; at night he followed and watched his little daughter as she sold her *boutonnières* in the uptown cafés and outside of the theatres in the Tenderloin.

Left motherless at the tender age of five, Teresina had grown up under blows and endearments, oaths and caresses, a struggling little sunbeam in a shady spot.

As it was, she lightened the hearts of her countrymen with a laugh that was a tune; she cheered the old and sick of the *quartier* with a voice as sweet and welcome as vesper bells; and her eyes held for Antonio Cappiani, the *maestro* of modern organ-grinders, an inspiration heavenly—so gladsome, in fact, that he had already worn out two cylinders of "Sweet Marie" playing her praises about town.

She was only fifteen, yet a woman. Her cheek had the blush of the ripening grape, her eye was brown as the hazel-nut, her hair black as midnight, and her figure—*Corpo di Bacco!*—divine! her bosom "half globed, like folded lilies in the stream."

Many were the *boutonnières* she sold along Broadway, and when,

after an unusually good night's work, she returned to the Bend with Giovanni, her pockets jingling with coin, the old man would forget his jealous fears and murmur admiringly in *patois*: "*Non pezzo piccolo, Terese, non pezzo piccolo, carissima!*" as he gloated over the shining silver.

Dio! it would never do to lose Teresa, his precious little mint, his pure white dove.

Diavolo! but he must guard her carefully, for had she not many suitors, young and old, rich and poor? Had he not seen the fine American signors in the uptown cafés try to kiss her when flushed with wine?

Inferno! he would run his stiletto through them, one and all, should they attempt to steal his daughter from him.

Of but one man was he really fearful—young Antonio, the organ-grinder, who lived in the rear tenement of the court, the window of whose room looked into the abode of his little one, and to the sill of whose window was attached the end of the Tassilo clothes-line.

Of all Teresa's admirers none so strong and handsome as Antonio Cappiani, none so well known and influential socially. He was the leader of all functions, and both the president and treasurer of the organ-grinders' association for The Protection of American Copyright.

It was common report that Antonio and his monkey were great money-makers, and that he had money in more than one savings bank.

In the day-time Teresa had to work under Maria Santuzzi, the old woman who lived on the top floor of the Mulberry Street "double-decker," and made wax flowers for a French firm in West Third street.

It was a distasteful task to the child of nature, moulding flowers of wax and forming the fantastic creations the old woman designed.

At night she really lived—forgot for the time her dreary existence—for it was then that Giovanni brought her the flowers she loved, flowers that she kissed and caressed with delight as she sallied forth to breathe for a few short hours in the artificial glare of Broadway.

Antonio was truly a man-about-town,

"East side, west side, all around the town,"

as his organ played and Gigi climbed.

Only on Sundays and late at night was he permitted to see his beloved Teresina, and then their meetings were stolen.

He used to stand in the doorway of the tenement and watch for her return, to be greeted with a smile from the girl and a fierce scowl from the father, who always tagged at her heels. That she loved him he knew by the smile and the many tender missives that found their way across the clothes-line running from the windows of their respective rooms, messages carried by Gigi in the dead of night.

Poor little Gigi ! How often Antonio aroused him out of his hard-earned rest and compelled him to stretch his tired little limbs traveling across the swaying line between the sighing lovers !

Thus did Antonio foil the dragons of his heart's Hesperides.

Gigi, stripped of his red zouave suit and cap, those gorgeous regimentals of his work-a-day life, would carry their miserably spelled notes and Antonio's gifts of sweets—sweets carefully wrapped in paper and tied with string, for Gigi was not an infallible "monk."

And how Teresina would welcome the little fellow with a kiss, and how Antonio would take that kiss from his furry cheek when he had safely made his return trip in the ghostly moonlight only the laughing stars can tell—and they never tell tales.

Gigi was the connecting "link" between the two, never missing, but always ready to prove the Darwinian theory that the man and woman owed their existence to him—as indeed the lovers did.

Gigi was a macaque, and a perfect gentleman in all his actions.

Unlike most of his kind, his deportment was excellent and his gestures never inappropriate to the occasion.

He was neither mischievous nor thievish, and was always mild and tractable, taking life seriously—not the joke his audiences seemed to consider it.

His education had not been neglected ; there was not a cleverer performer in the profession.

Antonio had even taught him to test bad money with his teeth, a proceeding which so shamed the guilty giver that a good dime was generally thrown after him.

Whatever meetings the young lovers planned had to be held when Giovanni was in a neighboring wine-shop, their trysting place a corner of the dark and grimy court below, behind a sheltering wood-house.

One night Giovanni Tassilo came home shrieking curses loud and deep throughout "the Bend;" he was frantic with rage, grief, and despair—he had lost Teresa!

She had disappeared around a Broadway corner in company with a tall, well-dressed man, an American signor, he thought. A policeman had seen them enter a cab and drive hastily away. Giovanni had been unable to trace or follow them.

Maledizione! Curses on the day he let her speak to the fine gentlemen of the cafés.

The wise ones of the colony winked the eye and said the police would never find her.

"*Poppotetta!*" La Picciola had her price like the rest of the girls; she wanted a higher bidder than Cappiani; she had run off with some rich American signor who would buy her fine gowns and put diamonds in her ears.

Giovanni swore that she had been kidnapped, that she never would have left him willingly—at which Pietro Santuzzi and the rest of the cabaret's habitués roared with laughter.

The hot blood of Giovanni could not brook the insinuation. Pietro Santuzzi was carried home with a bad knife thrust between the shoulders.

Antonio said nothing after his first furious outburst of grief and rage; he did nothing but preserve an ominous silence that boded ill to any jester that dared speak her name in his presence; he was as quick and ready with the knife as Giovanni. He kept silent and drank more vermouth and absinthe than was good for him.

The "Sweet Marie" cylinder was taken out of the organ and ground under foot; he would never play the melody again. To console himself he replaced the rejected cylinder with the intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana," and the music of Mascagni soothed him at times.

Gigi and he had long talks regarding the missing girl, at which *conversazioni* Gigi in answer to Antonio's many frantic inquiries as to her

whereabouts, would take off his little red cap and scratch his head in utter bewilderment.

Corpo di Christi! He would search for her and her lover if he had to travel the world over.

With this determination he and Gigi left the colony one day and became wanderers on the face of the earth. It was summer now, and the Mecca of his profession the sea-side resorts.

First they visited Coney Island.

There on the Bowery, along Surf Avenue, was a field of gold.

Gigi's new drill and pole climbing proved a great card, and Antonio rolled in wealth. But he was far from happy; there was a malignant devil in his heart, the lust to kill in his fierce nature, that could not be stifled. He had sworn a solemn vow to find the faithless one and the miscreant that had stolen her from him; he must kill them both!

Patience, though—the Order of the Mafia had taught him to be cautious and deliberate in his movements when seeking revenge.

The summer was waning; it was the tag end of the season when he and Gigi found themselves at Atlantic City. There Lorenzo Riccadonna with his wife and piano organ were the first they met with.

The information he thirsted for was his at last.

Lorenzo had seen Teresa in Philadelphia. She was living there, he said, but the man she was with was not *Americano*; he was *Italiano*, a rich restaurant-keeper who kept a *pensione* in New York as well as Philadelphia. He did not know the number of the house, but he gave Antonio the name of the street.

Trovato!

Despatch, lest they escape him!

In three hours' time he and Gigi were in Philadelphia. At last they found the street. The music of his organ would bring her to the window, he hoped.

He rattled off his répertoire, block after block, but the faces he and Gigi saw were all strange and unfamiliar.

He had pulled his hat well down over his eyes to avoid recognition; and as for Gigi, he was disguised in an entirely new uniform.

He was in the midst of the *intermezzo* from the "Cavalleria" when a familiar form appeared at the second story window of a small red brick house.

Presto! the face was turned toward him. In the gathering twilight the features were indistinct; he strained his eyes; his hat brim bothered him, but—yes, it was she! *Trovata!* it was Teresa!

Ah, but what a change from the girl of the Bend! She was no longer the simple, laughing little flower girl, but a heavy, dull-eyed, painted creature, adorned with cheap and flashy jewelry, and clad in a silk gown of startling red.

She leaned indolently out of the window and whistled to the monkey.

Antonio was now playing in galop time, his excitement was so intense. Gigi had begun to climb the waterspout of the quaint little house and was nearing the woman at the window. Would she recognize the monkey and, thus warned, escape him? was Antonio's one thought.

Gigi had reached the window-sill and was gravely saluting his former mistress. Antonio did not dare look up at the two, but ground away with his eyes fixed on the cobblestones, mechanically jerking at Gigi's rope.

Diavolo! He glanced up in surprise; the cord had suddenly grown very slack.

Che? Both the woman and monkey were gone from the window!

He pulled hard on the rope; it came tumbling to the ground with no monkey attached to it. What had become of the two?

Was she going to steal his "monk," his beloved Gigi?

Had she recognized—*Inferno!* perhaps she had recognized him; she was going to escape with him and cheat his master of his revenge.

The "monk" was off the string! *Dio mio!* but he must recover Gigi at any cost. He leaned his organ against the area railing and rushed madly through the open basement door.

A huge negress tried to bar his way, but he cast her aside with an oath and plunged on through the dark hallway in search of the stairs. He reached the first landing. There was a door, wide open, leading into a court in the rear; from the court ran a narrow alley, connecting with

the adjoining street. The house had both an entrance and exit leading into different streets.

Santa Maria! she had escaped him!

He dashed on upstairs and threw his weight against the door of the front room. It swung open to the vigorous push of his shoulder and he went sprawling on the floor.

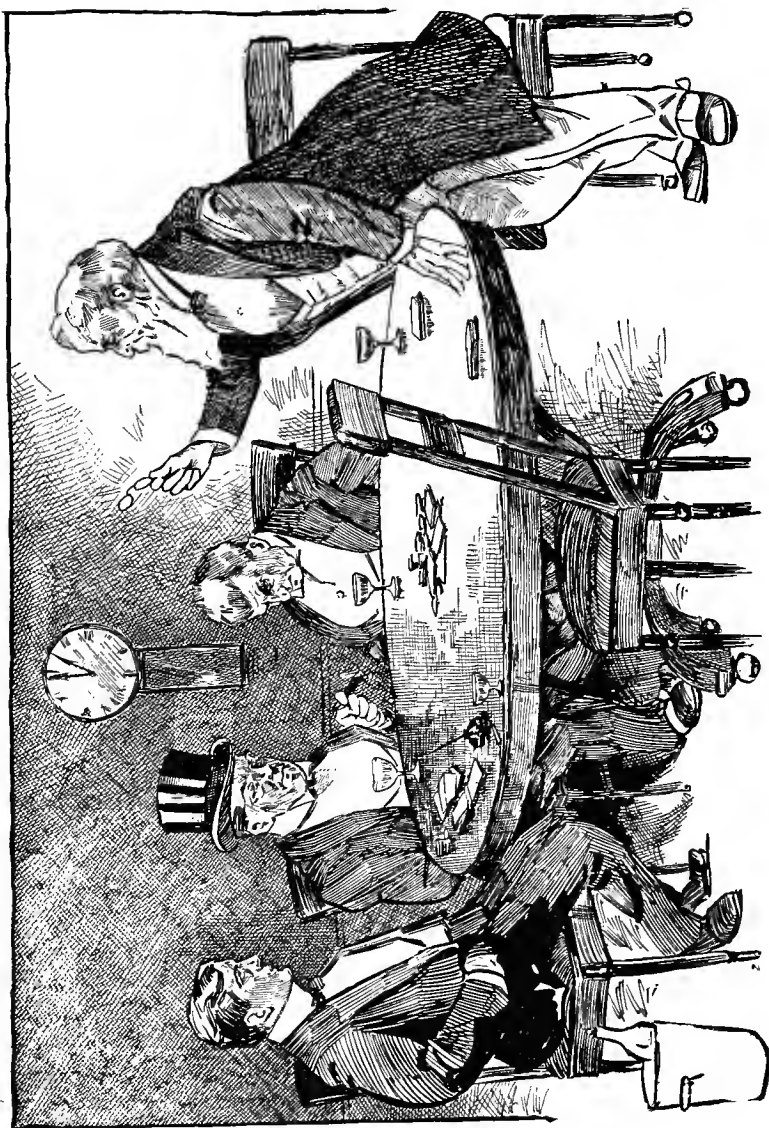
The room was deserted!

Slowly the door swung back on its hinges——

Ah! what was that—*there!* See, transfixed to the inside panel of the door a long, keen shining stiletto driven through it, its little arms and legs extended in a last agonized convulsion—what was it? Look again, Antonio, at the thing nailed to the door as if crucified, with the life-blood slowly ebbing from it and forming a dark pool on the carpet below.

“Mother of Christ!” he shrieked in Italian, staggering toward it with outstretched hands. Pinned to the breast by the blade was a scrap of paper on which had been hastily scrawled in Italian: “If you dare to follow me I will treat you as I have treated your monkey.”

When the policeman, who had been summoned to arrest the crazy organ-grinder, opened the door of the little second story front room, he found a dead man and a dead monkey. But the stiletto was no longer in the monkey’s body, it was up to the hilt in the man’s heart, and the writing on the paper was quite illegible.



AN INFAMOUS CONSPIRACY.

THE most infamous conspiracy ever hatched by three clever rogues had for its victim the scion of one of New York's oldest and wealthiest families.

A young man as mentally weak as he was morally bad, whose lack of mental, moral and physical stamina made the plot all the more possible and its consummation easily realized.

Young Brown was the son of a wealthy banker, and had been brought up in pampered idleness, his father permitting him an allowance amply sufficient to indulge his passion for high play. But generous as an allowance may be, a young man of gaming propensities is apt to "go broke" before the first of the month comes around, and promissory notes are as thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa.

Brown was a member of several swell clubs, where the table stakes were far from small and he also frequented the big gambling houses of the town. It was in one of these places that he made the acquaintance of Jim Dudley, the "lookout," and occasional dealer, of the faro game run in the establishment.

Jim Dudley was an all-round gambler and an exceedingly fine hand at the silver-lined box.

He knew more about "skipping the cut," "fantail" and "dove" shuffling than any of his professional brethren; from "thimble rigging" to poker playing Dudley was "out of sight."

One night, after young Brown had dropped some hundreds at the wheel and a cool thousand at faro, he and Dudley sat down to the house's supper, the gambler leaving the game to jolly the loser while they discussed the delicious supper that is always served in such places.

Brown was despondent and drank heavily.

"I wish I knew how to make money instead of losing it!" he exclaimed. "How is it that you—having no interest in the game—can live as well as you do? You are always behind good horse flesh in the park; you dine at Del's and the Hoffman with pretty actresses for your guests; your apartments are swagger and you seem to want for nothing. If this game wasn't on the dead level, I'd say you made your money here—picking a bird with a bottle."

"I occasionally meet a good soft thing outside of business hours," smiled Dudley. "By the way, I might put you on to something that would help retrieve the heavy losses you have sustained of late. Naturally, anything I go in for is sure—the safest kind of an investment—but I need big capital when I play against big capital and, furthermore, an absolutely respectable environment is necessary when the stakes are for big money."

"How much are you shy of?" asked Brown with a show of interest.

"Ten thousand—to land the man I have in view."

"Phew!" whistled Brown. "I couldn't raise that much ready."

"Could you come up to three in cash?" asked Dudley.

"P'r'aps. But what's the game and who's the man, and what will I have to do?"

Dudley took a pack of cards from his pocket and handed them to his companion. "Examine them and see if you find anything peculiar about them?"

Brown looked the pack over carefully, but his inexperienced eyes could discover nothing suspicious or unusual.

"You see nothing there—they have been scientifically bevelled, not marked," said Dudley. "This arrangement enables the dealer to take out any card he desires or to adjust the pack as he thinks proper," and Dudley suited the action to the word by practically demonstrating the manipulation of the deal.

"I can take a fresh pack and treat it in a few moments," observed Dudley, carelessly; "it's only a matter of imprint, you see."

"Now that I have taught you the trick and how to recognize the backs of the cards by these slight marks, it is dead easy for you to read

Listen to the proposition I have to make you. You are a man of good position and excellent family and belong to a number of fashionable clubs. Then listen. There is in New York to-day a rich Western mine-owner by the name of Hiram Holbrook. He has the reputation of playing the tallest game of poker west of the Mississippi. A pal of mine, Mike Connelly, has tried to get in with the old duck to induce him to come into a little game of draw in a private room of the hotel, where he is stopping, but no, the old duffer is leery; he requires a highly respectable club's environment in order to be made to play high and drop the sum we're after. As I say, I need environment and a little extra cash. If you can put him up at one of your clubs and bring two or three thousand into the game I'll give you the chance of a lifetime. You and I and Mike will be able to divide a small fortune between us."

The next morning Dudley introduced young Brown to Mike Connelly, who in turn presented them to the Western millionaire, Hiram Holbrook. He was a man about fifty, with a bluff, hearty manner and open countenance. His honest blue eyes beamed kindly behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. He received the new-comers with the greatest affability and begged all three to take luncheon with him.

He fairly staggered young Brown with stories of Western high play, where it was nothing to ante a hundred head of cattle.

He told how he had played the Wounded Antelope claim against the Little Adder mine; he had often won a silver mine cutting cards.

Brown was so impressed with the Westerner's wealth and nerve that he trembled at the thought of bucking up against him; but when he reflected that prepared packs were to be substituted by Dudley and the game "cooked," his fears vanished.

Brown invited the three men to dine at the club the next evening, saying he would have a private dining-room and that a little game might be indulged in, provided all were inclined that way.

The Sunset Club's membership was very large and there was little danger of inviting men of the stamp of Dudley and Connelly; besides, the eminent respectability of Hiram Holbrook, the silver king, would cloak all in righteousness.

The next evening found Brown and his guests installed in one of the handsomest private dining-rooms of the Sunset Club.

Dinner over, cards were proposed, and poker the game named. Brown rang for cards.

The servant brought unopened packs which were deftly exchanged by Brown for the prepared packs Dudley had given him.

Holbrook would stake nothing but greenbacks.

"Hang ivory!" he exclaimed, "'tain't fit for gentlemen. Let's play banknotes or I. O. U.'s. Chips, I repeat, are not fit for gentlemen; besides, I can never recollect what they represent."

Brown, secure in his knowledge that the game was theirs, played carelessly.

The Westerner drew to a pair, Jim and Mike did not stay. Brown thought his four queens good and raised and raised. Funny, but the Westerner showed him four flat kings!

Two more hands and Brown ran up against a flush and full house respectively.

In thirty minutes' time Brown's three thousand was wiped out. A glance from Dudley and Brown pulled himself into shape. He began to avail himself of some of the "manoeuvres" Dudley now signalled. His work was not difficult for the Western man was very near-sighted and held his cards close to his nose.

Luck changed suddenly and Holbrook began to lose heavily to the three conspirators, each in turn. Repeated losses had no effect on Holbrook's good humor.

"I'm not in a lucky vein to-night," he said pleasantly, taking a chew of tobacco out of a solid gold box, made from the ore taken out of one of his mines, he observed.

Play was hot, and Brown's face wore a smile of triumph—\$8,000 in paper and notes lay on the table beside him.

Connelly and Dudley had as much, too, only theirs was in paper, Brown having won all the cash of the party.

"Twenty-two thousand!" said the Westerner suddenly, after consulting some memoranda. "Ill luck has me in its clutches most decidedly. But let

me tell you right here, gentlemen, it is my rule never to lose more than \$25,000 at one sitting. So, before we stop playing, let's have some supper; perhaps it may change my luck. You can afford to give me that chance."

Supper was served and all drank sparingly, for they wished to keep their heads clear for the big game to follow.

When they sat down again Holbrook exclaimed: "I want to end this quick, at one or two strokes. What do you say, gentlemen, to jackpots of \$1,000?"

A series of jackpots were played, but oh, cruel deception! the remaining three thousand that Brown had felt so sure of winning went to their common adversary.

Connelly and Dudley went broke and dropped out of the game. A few more jackpots and Brown found himself out of the \$8,000 he had won and bucking against a piece of blind luck that even his knowledge of the cards could not change.

In despair he silently consulted Dudley, who signed to him to go on playing.

Play as he would, knowing the pack as he did, he could make no change in the game.

He once stood pat on a full house, but Holbrook dealt himself two cards in the draw and threw down four bouncing aces.

Brown ran deeper and deeper into debt. He had lost over \$28,000 to the Westerner when Holbrook arose from the table and stood with folded arms before him.

"Mr. Brown," he said sternly, "you must be very wealthy to risk such sums as you have staked. You are free, however, to spend your money as you choose, but however rich you may be, you must remember it is not enough to lose \$28,000—you have beside to pay it. Have I not played and paid in cash and thus set you the example? Come, pay me what I have won from you and then we will continue our game. Give me your check for the amount."

"Nothing could be more square and just, Mr. Holbrook," stammered Brown, "and I'd be willing to satisfy you, but you know, er, debts of this kind, my word——"

"The hell you say!" cried old Holbrook, white with passion, striking the table violently with his clinched hand. "Do you dare to talk to me about your word? It ill becomes you to contract debts of honor!" You are a rascal and swindler—yes, a low-lived cheat—these are marked cards, and it was you who introduced them into the game."

"Sir," gasped Brown, trembling with fear, "you, er, insult me!"

"I am astounded," said the Westerner ironically; "gentlemen of your class are generally impervious to insult."

"My Gawd! this is too much," cried Brown making a bluff at indignation. "You shall give me satisfaction for this, and at once, do you hear? Come outside."

"Not at all," answered Holbrook. "We can settle this matter of honor here in this room. It is very simple: Your two friends will be your seconds and I will send for mine," and Holbrook pressed the electric call button.

A club servant came to the door. "Find an officer of the club, one of the governing committee, and tell him to come at once and attend to an urgent matter. Be quick!"

"Stop," cried Brown in supplicating accents. "Stop," he repeated, now thoroughly intimidated. Then aside to the Westerner: "I'll do whatever you ask; I throw myself on your mercy."

"Waiter," said Holbrook to the servant, "wait outside the door. "Now," he added, turning to Brown, "let us understand each other. You cannot deny that you brought me and these two gentlemen here to fleece me, that you substituted marked cards for the packs the club furnishes. You are well aware that such an act would be punished by expulsion from the club and social ostracism. I wish, however, in consideration of your youth to be lenient toward you, but I exact that, as a warrant of your repentance, these cards—of which you have made use to swindle me—be fastened up and signed with your signature and then sealed with the signet ring you wear, which, I perceive, contains your coat of arms."

Brown hesitated, glancing alternately from Dudley to Connelly.

They signed him to do as was required.

"This is not all," said the Westerner when it was done; "we must now arrange our money matters. You cannot pay me? Very well. I must be contented with a guarantee. I understand men of your stamp are, as a rule, good penmen. You have a rich father. I wish to see an imitation, a good imitation, of his signature to a check to my order for \$28,000.

Brown's lower jaw dropped. He was as white as a sheet and shaking like a leaf. Holbrook made a movement toward the door. "For Gawd's sake, don't!" pleaded the utterly demoralized youth. "I'll do what you ask. I'll do anything to quiet this!"

He took a blank check from his pocket, a check on his father's bank. The three gamblers exchanged significant glances as he executed a skillful forgery for \$28,000.

Well, to shorten my story and bring it to a close; the next morning old Brown was visited by the three sharpers and the forged check shown him.

The son was sent for and tearfully admitted the truth of Holbrook's story.

Considering his son's and the family honor of greater value than \$28,000, old Brown gave Holbrook a certified check for the amount.

But the next day, learning the whole truth from his son he consulted a private detective agency in the hope of catching the rascals and getting back part of the money. It was too late, however; the trio had sailed for Europe that very morning and the banking house of Brown & Co. were out \$28,000, the result of a very clever though infamous conspiracy.



THE EIGHT-DAY CLOCK.

PRIZE ROMANTIC STORY.

“**A**N attendant wanted for a demented man ; salary \$25 monthly, with home ; asylum orderly preferred. Call, with references, between 8 and 9, Monday night, basement bell, No. 5 West Forty-first street.”

To a starving man work of any description means temporary salvation. Darragh grasped the torn sheet of newspaper as a drowning man would a straw. Under the glare cast by the sputtering arc burner he re-read the advertisement carefully. “I have never had experience as asylum orderly, never cared for an insane person,” he murmured ; “but what a soothing influence I seemed to exert over drunken classmates at college,” he added with a sad smile.

The clock in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel marked a quarter to eight.

The hope that springs eternal within the human breast bade Darragh arise from the bench and plod up the avenue.

The area way of No. 5 was filled with a wild horde of applicants.

One by one they entered and came out, utter discouragement depicted on some faces, careless unconcern on others ; while not a few gave vent to a devil-may-care laugh and bantering observation as they passed by the waiting ones and drifted away into the night.

Two cold grey eyes looked searchingly at Darragh through gleaming gold-rimmed spectacles when his turn came.

“You seem to be a leetle better born than the rest of them,” sniffed their owner suspiciously.

"If an accident of birth can benefit me in any way I shall be only too glad to profit by it, madam," he replied.

"Ever had any experience in an asylum?" she inquired.

"No madam, but I have studied medicine and am qualified to prescribe for most bodily ailments. I——"

"I think you'll do!" she exclaimed abruptly. "Where are your references and diploma?"

She ordered a servant to dismiss the remaining applicants and commenced reading the credentials Darragh had tendered her.

"Your name is Darragh?" she interrogated.

"Godfrey Darragh, at your service, madam."

"Mr. Darragh, you'll find the late incumbent upstairs packing his trunk. He'll instruct you as to your duties. Shall I send for your luggage?"

"Everything I possess in this world is on my back," replied Darragh.

She gazed at him keenly for a moment; then her hard face relaxed.

"You must be very poor, Mr. Darragh," she said in gentle tones. "Maggie," she called, "Mr. Darragh will dine before he goes upstairs."

What a transformation a hearty meal will make of a discouraged, famished man! In half an hour Darragh was himself again. A little, red-faced, broad-shouldered Irishman of uncertain age and terrific brogue greeted him at the top of the third landing.

"So yer the new attindant," he observed. "Ye'll niver shay —The Eight-Day Clock's a terror."

"Where is the patient?" inquired Darragh with dignity.

"Faith, an' he's aslape below. Wait till ye hear the alarrum go off, an' thin be after goin' to him. The Saints be praised, I'm lavin' wid a whole shkin this blissid avenin'."

"Am I to occupy this room?" asked Darragh, motioning to where the man stood.

"Holy Mother! If ye could I wouldn't be goin'. No, no, me laddibuck, it's only for yer ifficts; ye slape and live in the room that conicts with the Clock."

"Will you not kindly inform me as to the patient's condition and the course of treatment to be pursued? What is his hallucination, may I ask?"

"Hallucination!" exclaimed the Irishman. "Divil a thruer word did ye iver utter! I don't know what it manes, but it fits him—that it does! Well, me bye, he's wound up for good, is the Eight-Day Clock; there's no stoppin' him. Ye must niver touch his hands. They tell the time o'day, and his face can't be washed till the hands pint midday or half past six. An' it's the regulatin' of him that will puzzle ye; the Clock's aither too fast or too slow. Arrah,—harrk! do ye hear the alarrum goin' off down below? That's him callin' for ye!"

Darragh listened.

"Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-h!"

"That's the alarrum," explained the Irishman. "He makes that nise wid his tongue agin his teeth. Come along an we'll find out what time it is. Sure the wheels in that man's head is something wonderful!"

Even in his halcyon days Darragh had never seen a more luxuriously fitted up apartment than the room into which the Irishman ushered him.

The hangings were of rich Oriental stuffs, the walls paneled and covered with olive green silk, the hardwood parquet floor strewn with costly rugs of Persian and Turkish texture, the paintings works of art, the furniture and cabinet work of most delicate artisanship. Everywhere evidences of refinement, wealth and culture met the eye.

O'Brien approached the foot of the bed.

"It is now nine o'clock," he said very deliberately and slowly. "This is a very fine clock, Mr. Darragh, an' I want ye to take a good look at it."

Darragh took a step nearer and gazed down at the demented man's face.

If O'Brien's back had not been turned to him he never would have permitted himself the convulsive movement that made him grasp the brass bed rail and gasp for breath.

Godfrey Darragh was not a man to betray himself. The invalid's eyes were closed and he was breathing heavily; the exertion attendant

on giving "the alarrum" had exhausted him. It was a face of singular sweetness, stamped with the ineradicable imprint of melancholia. Jet black hair curled over a finely formed brow of exceeding whiteness; the nose was aquiline, and the mouth spirituelle to a degree of weakness.

The wan and wasted hands were crossed over the breast, nine fingers being visible, a tenth curled under the palm; it was nine o'clock!

"He counts to himself all the time," whispered O'Brien; "that's how he kapes track o' the hours—sixty seconds to the minute, sixty minutes to the hour. Oh, a wonderful lot of wheels in that head of his!"

The Clock sighed and opened his eyes. What beautiful eyes—deep blue, like sleeping sapphires, untouched by light!

"He niver speaks," whispered O'Brien; "everything has to be done by signs."

The Clock arose from the bed and tottered feebly toward a corner of the room.

O'Brien wrapped a bath robe round him and slipped his feet, leaving him standing immovable.

"I'm goin' now," said O'Brien; "take good care of the Clock, Mr. Darragh."

Darragh locked the door after him and put the key in his pocket.

He was glad to be rid of the ignorant fellow, and yet alone in the room (for the Clock was to be treated as an inanimate being!) he trembled. After turning the key in the lock, a strange feeling of dread came over him. Would his charge recognize him during a lucid interval? "Bah! what foolish fears," he muttered; "he's too far gone for anything like that."

A knock on the door interrupted his meditations. He turned the lock and found the woman who had engaged him standing outside.

"I might as well introduce myself, Mr. Darragh. I'm Mrs. Heath, the housekeeper, and I hope you'll get along nicely with your charge. I have left a supply of clean linen and two suits of clothes in the adjoining room; I hope they'll fit you. All of the patient's wearing apparel is in the closets and drawers of the dressing stands and chiffoniers. He performs his own toilette. You will find him perfectly tractable and a

gentleman in all his actions. You can let him have his way in everything, as he is never unreasonable in his requirements. He hasn't spoken a word for three years. His mind is a perfect blank, he has no memory for faces or—dishes; he doesn't know what he eats. He does nothing but count to himself, Mr. Darragh. A very sad case!

"I don't know the story of how it all came about; there's much mystery, I hear, connected with it. His father, Mr. Erskine, the banker, is our employer. He is now in Europe. I have only engaged you temporarily, Mr. Darragh; a professional nurse is expected in a few days. We women folks hate to be left alone in the house without a man."

Darragh closed the door after her and stood trembling from head to foot.

"She didn't know the story of how it all came about!" Who did? Did he?—and his guilty eyes sought the Clock. There he stood in the same position, his soulless eyes gazing into space, his arms folded across his chest. No; his secret was safe with the Clock—the Clock never spoke. Darragh lit a table lamp and, picking up a novel, tried to read, but the letters all formed themselves into little black clocks, and he gave up the attempt in despair and plunged into thought.

Were we not all clocks, wound up by the Creator to run our little day, regulated by the key of conscience, set to point a moral on the dial of life? To either cheer or discourage with our chime, to be faithful or false to the hour we keep, marking the time honestly or treacherously—"forever,—never! never,—forever!" till swung by the mighty pendulum

It was a methodical, systematic madness, the madness of calculation; he had lost time and was trying to recover it.

The Clock arose from his seat and pointed to the adjoining room, inclining his head slightly. Darragh understood the gesture as a dismissal and, returning the bow, retired.

"I wonder if he ever talks in his sleep? They say insane people have lucid dreams of the past. I wonder if he ever talks in his sleep?" Darragh found himself repeating

"Though he could not recognize in me the Godfrey Darragh of the *tripot*, still I may have conjured up some of the dead past by my voice. *Quien sabe?* I am playing a game against fate. True, he was not an eye-witness to it, but he heard my voice that night. Fool that I am, why did I permit him to hear the familiar tones again; sound oftentimes awakens memory. I must watch him to-night,—I must hearken to his slightest sigh."

It was past midnight when Darragh crept back into the Clock's room. The full moon, shining in through the swaying window curtains, bathed the bed in a shroud-like light. The Clock's eyes were closed, his lips moving mechanically, as if counting the seconds in his sleep.

Darragh stood by the sleeping man, watching the moving lips and listening for the faintest sound. Suddenly the deathly stillness was broken, the Clock spoke: "I must hide? Why should I hide? Let me meet him, Athalie. I will crush him as I have this rose—his gift—that I have torn from your hair. Let me meet him, I say. Your HONOR? You speak of honor,—you, who have deceived—lied to me! Bah! I must hide? Your life in the balance? Why not mine? Why not his? Why should I hide from him? The clock? Ha, ha!—hide in a clock; yes, hide in a clock. Now I am in the clock. I AM the clock, for the clock has stopped; I must keep the time. What a big clock I am! What a massive case enfolds me! It lacks a minute of midnight. Hark! he is at the top of the landing now, his hand is on the door-knob,—tick, tick, tick, I am the clock, ha, ha!—his key is in the latch. He enters. That voice, that voice, it is the croupier of the 'Washington.' Am I hiding from a common gambler? He will look for me in vain.—I am the clock,

but I must strike the hour or he will discover me. How shall I strike the hour?

"It is stifling,—give me air! give me air! What does he suspect? the clock? The clock has not struck the hour. It must strike; it must strike twelve times. Her honor, ha! ha!—her honor is at stake; he would murder her, she said.

"My God! Help! he is strangling her, he is killing her,—and I, I am helpless, I cannot come to her aid! I am a clock, only a clock, a clock that does not strike. My voice is muffled by the heavy panels! I cannot force the door; he has overturned the clock. Silence, silence—tick, tick, tick,—there are sixty seconds to the minute! I must strike at twelve, I must strike at twelve!"

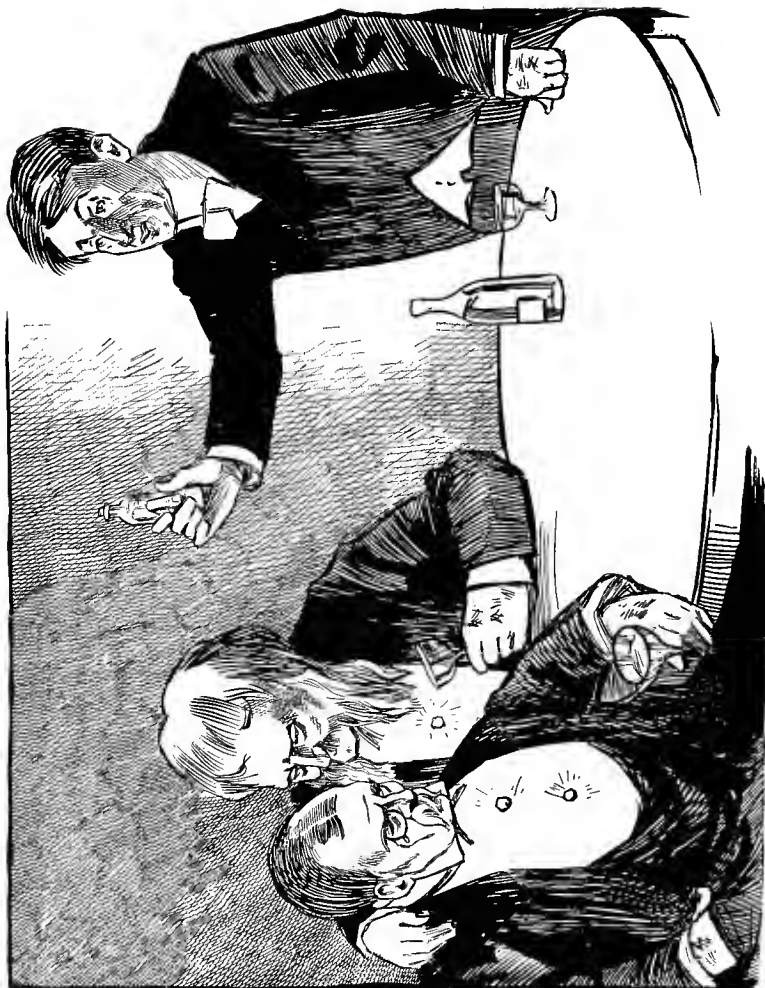
Darragh's haggard face had grown hard and drawn during the recital of the crime, his lips were tightly compressed, his teeth set, but the calmness of the gambler never left him.

He softly raised one of the pillows and placed it over the sleeping man's face, holding it firmly there for many minutes.

"I take no chances when I play against Fate," he muttered. "Anyhow he couldn't have lasted much longer. They'll call it heart failure in the morning."

He leaned over the body and put his ear to the heart.

The Eight-Day Clock had stopped forever!



THE BARON DU RHEM.

THE index and middle fingers of the left hand were missing. The two remaining fingers and thumb were well formed, delicate and taper. A palmist would have said that the formation of the hand denoted character.

Ethel Allen could not possibly have failed to notice such a hand, especially as it lay on the *table d'hôte* of the Antrim Arms, and right next to her seat.

Its owner manipulated his fork with singular grace and seemed to take pride in his three-digit dexterity.

The Allens, *en route* for "the States" after a six months' tour of Europe, were giving a few days to the North of Ireland and the Giant's Causeway, and it was at the railway hotel at Portrush that they made the acquaintance of the Baron du Rhem, as the man with the missing fingers called himself.

The Allens were of that delightfully popular class of middle-class Americans that "do" Europe "regardless of expense," and keep alive in the minds of foreign hotels and shop-keepers the prevailing belief that all Americans are walking gold mines.

Not only were the Allens, *père, mère, et fille*, truly democratic in their tastes; they were positively gregarious in their habit and manner of making friends.

"I always judge a gent by his jewelry," was one of old Josiah Allen's maxims.

"A lady proclaims herself such by her dress," was an adage of Ma Allen.

And the daughter laid down for an axiom: "If a young feller's well turned out, he'll do." It was natural, then, that the Baron du Rhem,

scion of the ancient and noble house of that name, should have made a most favorable impression upon these people.

The Baron wore diamonds and rubies, gems every one of them—a four-karat stone of matchless brilliancy on the little finger of the stumpy hand, a huge pigeon-blood ruby of perfect purity on the third finger of the sound right.

In evening dress the Baron flashed like a hotel clerk of the comic weekly ; his shirt-bosom was a sea of dazzling light, and the Baron's various split-second chronometers, watch chains, charms, jeweled cigarette and cigar-cases called forth exclamations of admiration from Papa Allen, who pronounced him the first foreigner of real distinction he ever met.

As for the Baron's sartorial display, why, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the Baron. Mamma Allen called him a modern Beau Brummell, with the accent on the "*mell*."

Ethel thought the Baron just too sweet for anything. He had such a dear little broken English, breaking-heart drawl ; he was so courtly and chivalrous, so romantic and interesting, with his coal-black hair and eyes, his classic Grecian features, and his poor maimed hand.

The two fingers, he informed Miss Allen five minutes after exchanging common *table d'hôte* civilities, had been blown off by "the explosion of his fowling-piece while hunting on his estates in the south of France." The gun had burst in his hands, lacerating two fingers so badly that amputation had been necessary, she told her father who was trying to understand him, but could not. The Allens were charmed, delighted, with the Baron.

"He has the *genuine* Burgundian look, Josiah," remarked Mrs. Allen to her husband as they were preparing for bed.

"Bourbon, you mean, my dear," he timidly corrected.

"Oh, as you please, Josiah," she replied, airily ; "the words are *anonymous*. What a ketch for Ethel ! Jest fancy our bringing back to Ditchfield a real live French baron of the old reejyme. He showed me some photographs of his chateau at Nay in the south of France. He sighed as he showed them to me. I fear his estates are encumbered—

old ancestral mortgages. How few Americans can boast of mortgages a century old, Josiah!"

"He's a nobby little dresser, Maria; I never see such diamonds before."

"A Chesterfield, Josiah; his manners and dress are *sans poor et sans reproach*. He is a perfect Bayard, always exquisitely *recherchy* and *de tropp* in his toilette."

"Baron," said Papa Allen the next morning, as the two leaned against the bar of the Antrim Arms, where they had been jollyng the barmaid for over an hour, "Baron, what do you say to a run across the pond with us? We all like you so much that we want you to make us a visit at Ditchfield. And Baron," here Josiah Allen's voice sank to a confidential whisper as he softly dug the Baron in the ribs, "that gal of mine seems to think a lot of you. He! he! She told her ma so!"

"Indeed!" murmured the Baron, a pleased and amused smile playing about his lips as he stroked his piratical black mustache reflectively. "America! the great country I have heard and read so much about," he said, pensively; "the land of the free and the home of the brave. You do me much honor, my dear friend, and it would afford me much pleasure to accompany you, but——"

Here the Baron made a judicious pause.

"But what?" impatiently demanded Papa Allen.

"The fact is, my dear friend," went on the Baron, "I could hardly visit America, the land of the Anarchist and Socialist, the home of The Interviewer, the great American Reporter, in my true character. I should have to conceal my indentity and travel *incognito*. If I could sail under your name—as one of your family, let us say—a son or very near relative, I might escape the disagreeable notoriety that would surely be attendant on the arrival of the Baron du Rehm in the United States. I have various reasons, my dear Allen; one, the best, is that I am connected with a political movement afoot, the instigators of which are supposed to be continually under the surveillance of the secret agents of the French Government. Here in the north of Ireland, at this little inn, I have permitted myself to be known to you by my true name and title; but on leaving this place I shall be forced to assume a different name and character."

"I think I understand you, Baron; you are more or less a political exile, and are endeavoring to keep your movements as quiet as possible in order to baffle the Government's secret service?"

"*Parfaitement*," answered the Baron.

"Well," said Papa Allen, decidedly, "when we take the steamer at Queenstown you shall go aboard as my son, Mr. Maurice Allen. Our quite little home circle at Ditchfield will only know the Baron du Rhem, the last of the Bourbons."

* * * * *

When the City of Chicago took on the mails at Queenstown, the tender brought a number of passengers, among them the Allens and their newly-found French friend, now known and treated as one of the family.

To the great surprise of the Allens the first person they met as they came aboard was young Treadwell Slote, of Ditchfield, one of Ethel's most ardent admirers. He informed them he had run over to do a little shopping, having guessed successfully a newspaper problem involving the placing of the first, second and third horses in the big race of the year—the price being a first-class round-trip to London and Paris, with four weeks to make it in, the newspaper defraying all expenses.

"Well, you *was always* lucky, Treadwell," observed Mamma Allen, and then she grew somewhat confused, for he was gazing curiously at the Frenchman devoting himself to Ethel, and Mrs. Allen did not know exactly how to introduce the two.

"Treadwell," said she, "he's the Baron du Rhem, one of the Burgundy people. He's *incog*. Call him Allen, for that is the name he has assumed traveling with us."

Slote looked at her in surprise.

"I don't quite understand," he said, but the introduction was forthcoming, and he bowed to the new Mr. Allen.

Young Slote was very much disgusted with what he termed their "gullible credulity."

Who ever heard of the Du Rhem family or read of them, he asked. This man might be an adventurer, for all they knew.

Pa and Ma Allen put down these remarks as prompted by jealousy,

and Ethel turned up her nose at him when meeting him on deck the next morning, giving him an awful snub as she passed clinging to the Baron's arm.

Slote was sitting in the smoking-room of the vessel an hour later moodily meditating on the tomfoolery of the world in general and his friends, the Allens, in particular. He was puffing away at his pipe in an exceedingly irritable frame of mind when a fellow-voyager entered to order a drink and enjoy a smoke.

The room steward had taken his order and left them alone.

The stranger sat down on the leather couch seat next to Slote.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I should like to ask you a question."

His manner and tone were so abrupt, business-like and brusque, that young Slote stared at him in perfect astonishment.

"Well, what is it?" he stammered.

"Are you traveling with a party aboard this ship by the name of Allen?" asked the stranger.

"No," replied Slote. "Why do you ask?"

"I thought not," pursued the stranger, with a smile. "And you are not acquainted with the Frenchman they have with them?"

"No, I never heard of him before," answered Slote, "but the Allens are friends of mine. Don't think me impertinent if I ask you what business it is of yours to ask me these questions?"

The stranger laughed, and for an answer took from out his hip pocket a small glass bottle. With both hands he covered its contents.

"There is a story inside of that bottle. Would you like to hear it?" he asked.

Not knowing whether he was dealing with a lunatic, an inventor, a detective, or a crank on some explosive, Slote resolved to humor his *compagnon de voyage*, and replied that it would give him great pleasure to listen to what he had to say.

"I am the traveler and buyer for a large New York diamond importing house," said the stranger. "My name is Lewis—Henry D. About a year ago I was in Paris on business for the house I represent.

"You must know that we diamond men, that carry so many thou-

sands of dollars' worth of precious stones about our persons, are objects of interest to criminals that play for big game and make diamond men a special study.

"A great deal of '*body*' smuggling is indulged in by foreign buyers, especially those that are 'in touch' with the customs at New York. I never trust stones off my person when traveling. As it is at this moment, young man, I am lined throughout with stuff—to be declared, of course, duty to be paid; for it is a regular consignment I have with me.

"Well, a little over a year ago I was in Paris, and feeling as gay as that gay capital. I'd done a good stroke or two, and was leaving for Havre the next morning to take the steamer for home.

"I thought one parting drink of Paris life was what I needed, so sallied forth that night loaded down with my stuff, as was my wont, a gun in one pocket and a sharp bowie-knife in a coat pocket cut expressly for it. There's not a hotel-safe in the world that I'd trust my diamonds in. I met a number of convivial friends and drank heavily—enough to make me reckless and forget that I had over twenty thousand dollars' worth of stuff on my person.

"It was in some café chantant that I met one of its women *habitués* and was prevailed upon to accompany her home. She was bewitchingly Bacchante enough to make any son of Bacchus lose his head. To cut a long story short, I'll tell you right here that she was what the French police call '*un bât marquereau*'—what is known in New York as a badger or panel-game worker.

"She left me alone in the room when we reached the house, pleading sudden indisposition. I had already doffed my very valuable overcoat and thrown it on the only available article of furniture in the room—a low divan against the wall at the farther end of the room from the bed. The only precaution I took (which was an exceedingly lucky one, as subsequent events proved) was to remove my knife and revolver from their respective pockets and place them within reach.

"Stretched on a low *fauteuil*, I was wondering whither my fair companion had betaken herself, when a slight, creaking noise caused me to turn my head in the direction where my overcoat lay.

"Imagine my consternation to see a hole in the wall and a hand inserted through it in the act of lifting my very valuable garment. You may have observed that I am a very quick man in my movements. It didn't take me more than five seconds to grab revolver and knife and make for that hole in the wall.

"They heard me bound off the bed, but secure as they thought themselves (she had locked me in the room), the owner of the hand—it was a man's—was deliberately slow in gathering my coat up, so slow, in fact, that in pulling his hand out of sight he left two fingers on the floor of my room. I both fired and swished at the hand.

"The bullet missed it, but the razor-like blade of the heavy knife did its work.

"I shall never forget his yell of pain and rage!

"When I burst open the locked door and explored the place, I found myself in a deserted and unfurnished house.

"The room she had taken me in was the only one the panel-workers had fitted up

"I hastily left the house.

"In their wild flight they had failed to close the outer door.

"Wrapped in my handkerchief were the ghastly souvenirs of the evening's entertainment—a pair of fingers.

"I have kept them in spirits, in the hope of some day meeting their owner and returning him his lost property."

The narrator paused and tossed off the cocktail the steward had placed on the table before him.

"Didn't you inform the police at once?" breathlessly inquired Slote.

"Of course not. Had the story reached the firm's ears they would have discharged me—my reckless conduct would have cost me my position."

"Well, what is this story of yours apropos of, anyhow?" asked Slote, a vague suspicion astir in his mind.

"Are you acquainted with the Frenchman who knows your friends, the Allens, so well?"

"No. I answered you that question once before. I don't know

where they picked him up. He poses as a cousin of the Duc de Pen-thièvre, the son of the Prince de Joinville, who, you know, is a descendant of Louis Philippe, the 'citizen King.' "

"Rot," said the diamond man; "you don't believe any of that?"

"Certainly not. Do you know anything of the fellow?"

"I know that two of the fingers of his left hand are missing; and I'll bet a ruby to a rhinestone that I carry the missing fingers in the bottle I showed you."

"What?" almost screamed Slote. "Are you crazy," he demanded, staring hard at him.

"Wait and see," was the diamond man's reply.

"What do you intend doing?" asked Slote, excitedly,

"I shall tell him the story I've just told you, and I want you to watch his face while I do. Wait till we're off Quarantine and the crowd's gathered in this room celebrating the quick passage we shall have made. Can I depend upon you?"

"Here's my hand," cried Slote, and the two men shook and rang for drinks.

Young Slote sat at the captain's table with the Allens, directly opposite the Baron. That night he observed the mutilated hand very closely.

Just above the knuckle of the middle stump was a slight blue mark on the flesh that looked as if made by a tattooing needle—a light blue discoloration, that on second thought could be attributed to the effect of an explosive.

The Baron was quite popular in the smoking-room with men of sporting proclivities. He played a stiff game of poker, and made up pools on everything one could guess. The Baron always gave old Allen wonderful hands when he dealt, ringing in a cold deck on himself so the old man could win. Slote and the diamond man exchanged significant glances more than once as they watched the pair bucking away against each other, the rest of the players having gone out of the game.

Sandy Hook was passed, and the City of Chicago lay anchored off Quarantine. It was long past midnight, but the steamship's smoking-room was a blaze of light and a flood of champagne. All hands were

whooping it up. Lewis, the diamond man, with a glorious counterfeit "jag," had just roared out a toast: "Gentlemen, here's to the American Eagle! May he drop feathers all over the crown of Great Britain and wipe his feet on the Lilies of France!"

The Baron and a number of Englishmen took exception to this patriotic toast. A drunken brawl was imminent.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, my friend will apologize!" cried Slote.

"Yes, yes," hiccoughed old Allen—"mus" (hic) "pologize!"

Lewis made some gracefully drunken remarks to the effect that "he didn't know where he was at," that he had quite forgotten himself in his enthusiasm at getting back home again, and volunteered to tell a rattling good story to square himself with the crowd.

"Let's have it!" they roared.

The diamond man commenced his recital. Slote leaned against a table where he could command a good view of the Frenchman, who sat underneath the frosty electric light by the side of old Allen.

The Baron's face preserved a sphinx-like expression until Lewis came to that part of his story where he described the room; then the Frenchman's face grew several shades paler, and his hands sought his trouser pockets.

"At first I thought I was dreaming, gentlemen, when I beheld the hole and saw that hand—dreaming, only dreaming. The room was dimly lighted, and, as I remarked before, there had been nothing done to arouse my suspicions."

The Baron had arisen, and was about to seek the deck.

"Wait a moment; let's hear this," begged old Allen; "it's excitin'," and he pulled him down beside him.

Slote saw huge beads of perspiration gather on the guilty wretch's forehead.

He sank limply in a heap and thrust his tell-tale hand deeper into his pocket.

"A twenty-thousand-dollar overcoat was about disappearing, but my movements were so lightning quick that I slashed the keen edge of my bowie across that hand just in the nick of time. What do you think I

caught with my knife?" he demanded savagely of the trembling Frenchman, who cowered behind old Allen.

The Baron vouchsafed him no reply; he was deathly white and in a half-fainting condition. All eyes were turned upon him.

"I caught the contents of this bottle," cried the diamond man, flashing it out of his pocket.

"Here!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, his excitement making his voice crack, "here are the two fingers I lopped off, and which I have since kept in spirits, a living memento, as two silent witnesses to the truth of this story."

The Baron had fainted.

The diamond man broke the neck of the bottle, emptying liquid and fingers on the table before him.

He picked up his *evidence* and advanced to the side of the unconscious Frenchman. Everyone was speechless with astonishment. He drew the left hand from out the trouser-pocket and matched the fingers to the stumps.

The faces of the gaping crowd wore a look of electrified amazement.

"Observe," said the diamond man, recovering his usual composure and entirely forgetting his assumed drunkenness, how the restored middle finger meets the blue mark above the knuckle, thus completing the base of the Maltese cross that is tattooed on the finger. I don't say that this is the man that tried to rob me, gentlemen," he added, very quietly, "but he's helped to make my story a realistic one."

Slote, who was bending over the prostrate form, suddenly raised his hand for silence. "He's dead!" he exclaimed. "Heart failure is convenient, sometimes!"

* * * * *

The Préfecture of Police at Paris received the following cablegram from the Central Office Detective Bureau at New York a day later: "Man arrived Chicago dead. Property recovered."

When old Allen read the account of the clever French thief's wonderful career and numerous robberies in a New York newspaper, he remarked, confidentially, to young Slote, that "he never again should judge a gent by his jewelry."

THE LAST TONE.

IT is the season at Cannes. The scene is the private drawing-room of the suite occupied by Mrs. Schuyler Van Keuren in the Hôtel Prince de Galles.

Connecting with this suite are the apartments occupied by Ivan Navrowski, the celebrated piano virtuoso.

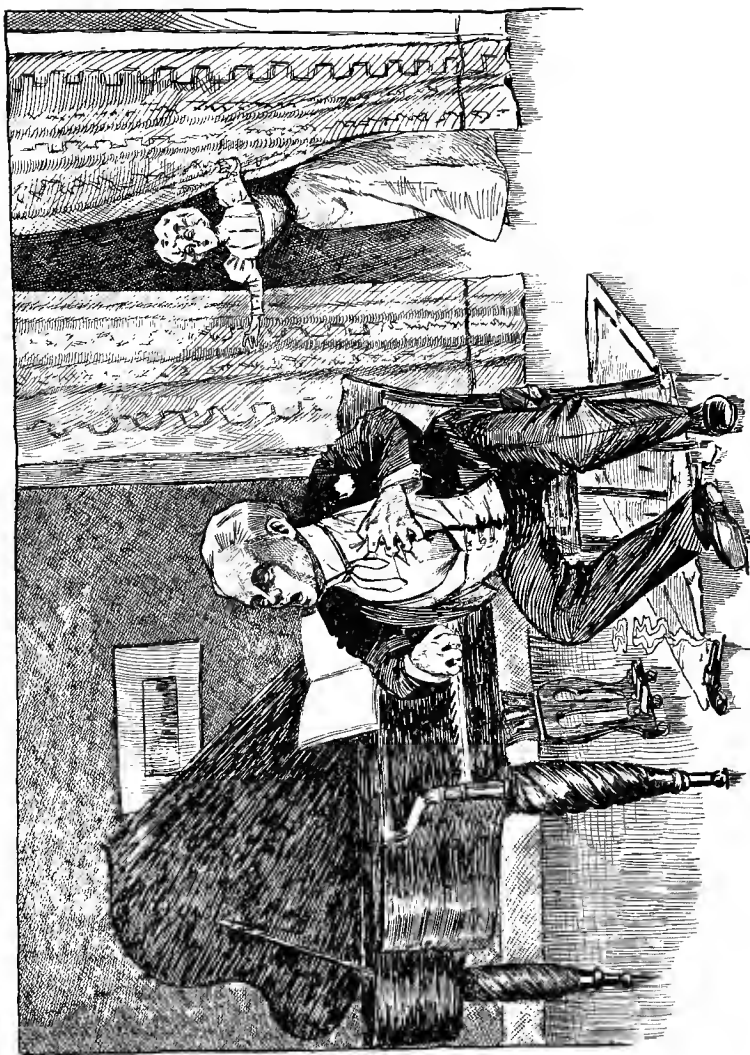
A tall, old-fashioned clock stands on one side of the closed doors dividing the two suites, and the clock's hands point to a quarter of eleven.

Mrs. Van Keuren is reading the morning's *Galignani's Messenger*. She is evidently very much annoyed at something; her face is flushed and her brow wears a heavy frown. Her daughter Katherine stands at the open French casement leading out to the hotel garden, and the sunlight glints lovingly over her as she reads the note which has just been brought in attached to the magnificent bunch of roses she holds with it.

"Still brooding over her miserable infatuation," observes Mrs. Van Keuren, glancing over her shoulder for the third time. "The sooner we leave Cannes the better. Change has always such a salutary effect in these cases; she will have forgotten him and his music by the time we reach Algiers. Oh, dear, what trials an ambitious mother has!" She resumes her reading of the *Messenger*. "What an appalling list of American arrivals! I never read the names—one does not come abroad to meet one's countrymen. So far I have been quite successful in keeping Katherine's American admirers in the back-ground." She reads aloud: "'Baron de Billière's l'Etoile won the Prix du Midi at Pau yesterday.' That's another box of gloves I owe you, Kate, dear."

Katherine is too absorbed in her letter to hear.

"How *distracte* the child is!" mutters Mrs. Van Keuren petulantly. "I must draw her out. I am afraid it is not all over between her and that wretched Polish pianist. He was to have left this morning. Why



does he remain here? He promised me on his word and honor as a gentleman he would leave Cannes.”

Mrs. Van Keuren affects a tone of nonchalance, carelessly inquiring from whom are the flowers.

“From Monsieur Navrowski,” the girl answers.

“Is he still here?” asked Mrs. Van Keuren, with assumed surprise. “Ah! this seems to account for the delay in his departure: ‘To-night, by command of His Majesty King Humbert of Italy, now visiting at Cannes, M. Ivan Navrowski, the famous piano virtuoso and composer, will repeat the programme of his concert of the 27th, added to which he will for the first time perform what he himself considered the *chef d’œuvre* of his life. The galaxy of musical critics is all expectant as to the *motif* selected by the *maestro* for his composition, which he considered will open up new possibilities in the art and science of harmony. The composer claims to have discovered the universal keynote to all harmonies, and he calls it the Last Tone, which is also the title of his creation. Speculation is rife as to the true inwardness of his intent. Is the ‘last tone’ the highest tone or the lowest tone? Is it the gayest tone or the saddest tone? Or is M. Navrowski perpetrating an innocent little hoax on the Cannes community? We await with interest the outcome of this evening’s musicale.’ This announcement reads like an advertisement. Has Monsieur Navrowski gone out of his mind? What does it all mean, Kate?”

Katherine comes slowly toward her, the open letter and bunch of roses still in her hands. “This is what it all means, mother,” she answers, and reads aloud:

“‘MY DEAR MISS VAN KEUREN—I am about to rehearse for the last time prior to the concert to be given this evening what I consider to be the crowning work of my lifetime. In this work I was inspired by your being and the poetry of your presence in my life. It is a tribute to the sentiment engendered by all that you are to me, and baptized by the best blood of my heart. Premonition has given title to this child of my fancy, and for your sake more than my own I love the pain that called it forth.

“‘Since circumstances makes you forego the acceptance of a life of

devotion, I can henceforth appeal to you only in the language of the realm of which I am prince, and I beg you to permit me to dedicate this 'Last Tone' as proof positive of my sincerity and disinterestedness.

" 'As the clock in your room strikes eleven withdraw the portières over the doors and let me come to you once again in the eloquence of harmony.

" 'I dedicate to you 'The Last Tone,' the harmony of harmonies. *Wait for the last tone.*

" 'NAVROWSKI.' "

Katherine's tears have fallen on the pages. She kneels at her mother's side and buries her face in her lap, sobbing.

"Just like a crazy musician to write such a letter!" exclaims Mrs. Van Keuren, angrily. "Why, Kate, I am surprised at you. I thought all was over between you, and here you are sobbing your heart out, and all over a miserable, worthless piano player—a mere musician. How can you, Kate; how can you?"

Katherine raises her tear-wet face and looks her mother in the eyes.

"I love him," she answers. "In spite of all you can say, I love him, mother.

When I told you last night that I had rejected him and all was over between us, I was sincere——"

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Van Keuren, "yes, yes, Kate, dear; like the good, sensible girl you are, I knew you would sleep over it——"

"But I *waked* over it, mother, and with me waked my love, sleepless as myself."

"Katherine," says Mrs. Van Keuren, in decided tones, "this *must* be brought to a close; it is simply preposterous! The idea of a Schuyler Van Keuren flinging herself away on a crazy adventurer-musician! I positively forbid you to entertain any further thought of this man. You will bring shame and disgrace on our family name. We leave Cannes to-day!"

Katherine has risen and moved toward the clock, but as her mother speaks the announcement of their departure she turns and faces her.

"Mother, you will leave without me." The reply is made in a firm and calm voice ; the girl's face expresses determination.

"What !" gasps Mrs. Van Keuren. "Is this the reward of years of care and devotion? Are you going to cast me aside for a comparative stranger—a man you know nothing of? You, who have had such opportunities ; you, the reigning belle of a London season, the envy of all your sisters in society—are you crazy? Think of the proposals you have had since you have been here ! Only last week Sir Geoffrey Chalmers offered you one of the oldest titles in England."

"And the oldest taint as well," interjects the girl.

"Lord Falcon," resumes her mother, "a man who adored the very ground you walked on——"

"Especially my New York realty," interrupts Katherine, with a little laugh.

"And, oh ! Katherine," continues her mother, sorrowfully, "think of that dear little Count de Gruyère, who offered you one of the oldest names in France, one of the most beautiful estates in the Midi, a place historically noted for its, its——"

"Fast maturing mortgages," supplies Katherine, with provoking flippancy.

"Disappointment of disappointments," pursues her mother, not noticing the interruptions, "when you refused His Excellency the Duc de Rougechène." The girl replies angrily this time: "Mother, this is more than I can endure ! The Duc de Rougechène of whom the newspapers reek at this moment—a man whose very presence would be a profanation to the virtue of our sex—a moral leper who breathes contamination ! I loathe him as I loathe the instinct that makes you ask such degradation of me. Even now one of his many mistresses is flaunting herself under your very nose here in Cannes. You speak of such men in the same breath with Ivan Navrowski, who stands like a giant above the pigmies and puppets you mention ; a man to whose genius monarchs bow, a man whose touch thrills nations, a man who, through his art, elevates and endears the people—my Ivan, who has unfolded to me my better self and made me know the woman

that I am ! Until I met him, what was I ? The shallow, artificial girl of society, a creature of impulse and caprice, a meaningless nothing ! And now that he has come into my life, awakening chords untuned, undreamed—now that I have found my soul's melody, you wish me to deafen my ears to it !”

The girl's outburst has nonplussed the mother for the moment.

“Katherine, Katherine, what would your father say if he were alive ?” she feebly answers.

“Did he ever know such a love as mine ?” fiercely demands the girl.

“I tried to make him happy, Katherine. Didn't I bring him wealth and restore his fortune ? Didn't I make him a good and dutiful wife ? Oh, Katherine, why do you rake up painful memories of your poor, dear father at such a time ? I always made him happy—and it has come to my own daughter's upbraiding me !”

“Mother, dear, I don't upbraid you. I am pleading for myself and for a love that was denied both of you—a love that neither of you would understand, because it never entered your lives.”

Mrs. Van Keuren perceives that she must try another line of argument with her daughter, and drawing her to her, kisses her fondly. “Kate, darling,” she says, softly, “alas for those who must live in Bohemia and not be of Bohemia ! You do not seem to realize what a union with this musician means. You only think of him, not of that of which he is a part—his environment, his associates, his Bohemia. Do you know what lives the wives of these poor artist-men lead ? Can you produce an example where a man of genius could make his wife happy, even if he wanted to ? It is not in the nature of things that he should. He does not belong to wife, child or home ; he is the common property of a public ; he is abject slave to his career ; he is everyone's and no one's. Kate, I have warned you before and I warn you again—a woman can idolize him, but she can never be a wife to him.”

“To hear you speak, mother, one would suppose you had made a study of the lives of geniuses, not to mention the lives of saints. You speak as if Ivan Navrowski were nothing more than a commonplace

musician. I tell you, mother, 'great as master at his art, so great his soul, so great his heart.' "

"A sad infatuation, Kate; a sad infatuation. Of the crowds of light-headed women who throw themselves at Navrowski you are but one—and he knows it. To-day you happen to please him, and he encourages you; to-morrow he will mock you. My child, you do not know him or his kind. He is no different from the rest; he is but one of them."

Mrs. Van Keuren has approached the open casement.

"Look!" she exclaims. "See him now pacing up and down the garden in one of his black moods. Would you dare go to him now?"

"I respect the moods that make the man what he is," the girl replies, "and it pains me to have you watch and criticise him at such a time as this. Would I dare go to him now? I am always with him."

"My dear," commences Mrs. Van Keuren, calmly, "constancy is no part of him or his tribe. But why should I stand here and argue with a lovesick, silly girl," she adds, impatiently, her temper getting the best of her. "I have made my decision; it simply cannot be. We leave Cannes to-day to avert a serious misfortune—a step that will cost you everything."

"I have decided to remain," answers the girl, doggedly; "you will leave without me."

Mrs. Van Keuren's face is ablaze with rage. "Listen!" she cries, threateningly. "If you are going to be so unreasonable and blind to what concerns your welfare there is no alternative. Insist in this, and you will sacrifice my love and consideration as a mother—I will cut you off without a sou-marque!"

"Mother!"

"You goad me to say hard things, but I am desperate, Katherine, and you have made me so. I will thwart you in every step that leads to this damnation. I want to save you from yourself. I should feel like a criminal if I didn't. Remember you renounce everything when you disobey me. You know that I mean every word I say."

She rings a bell, and a lady's maid enters from an adjoining room.

" Marie, have our trunks packed immediately ; we leave at four this afternoon."

Katherine's eyes are on the clock; it lacks the hour by two minutes.

Mrs. Van Keuren points to the room from which the maid entered. " Leave the room ! " she says sternly to her daughter. " I shall not permit you to hear this lunatic's ' last tone,' as he calls it."

" ' The Last Tone ' is mine ! " cries the girl, passionately, " and if it costs me my life I will hear it ! And when he has struck the last tone I shall throw myself into his arms, and he will restore me to all I shall have lost."

The improvisation to " The Last Tone " is heard, and the first few bars have transfixed both mother and daughter. Katherine has run to the doors and drawn aside the heavy hangers; she stands with her golden head pressed close to the panel, clasping her bunch of roses to her heart. Her mother, exhausted, discouraged and disgusted, is music-lover enough, however, to be curious, and reclining in the chair into which she has despairingly dropped, she listens to the music.

Music ! We can feel it, we can hear it, we can sing it; but, like the soul, it is beyond description.

Ivan Navrowski was playing the harmony of all harmonies ; he was interpreting " The Last Tone " as only Navrowski could. His audience of two were spellbound ; not only his note but the theme itself bade them *wait for the last tone*—the keynote of all harmonies.

Louder and louder came the soul-cry ; higher and higher soared the spirit of sound——

Then a sharp report !

With a cry of frenzied despair Katherine forces the doors apart, and a puff of smoke floats over the girl as she falls senseless to the floor.

Mrs. Van Keuren has rushed to her side. The sickening sight that meets her eyes through the half open doors makes her recoil in horror, but these words escape her lips : " Thank God, *the last tone !* "

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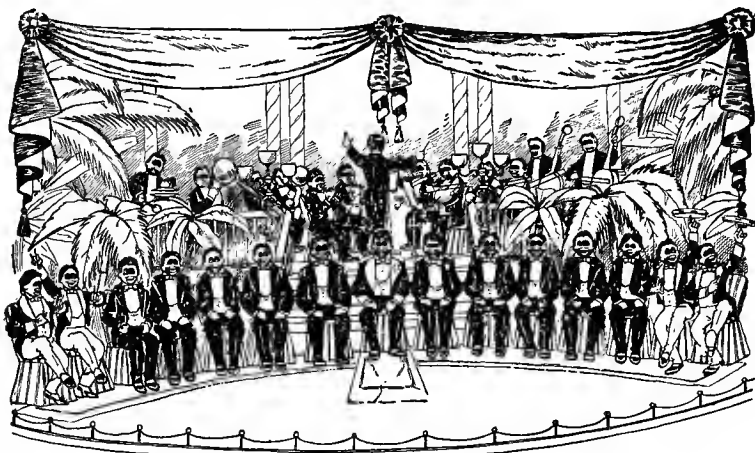
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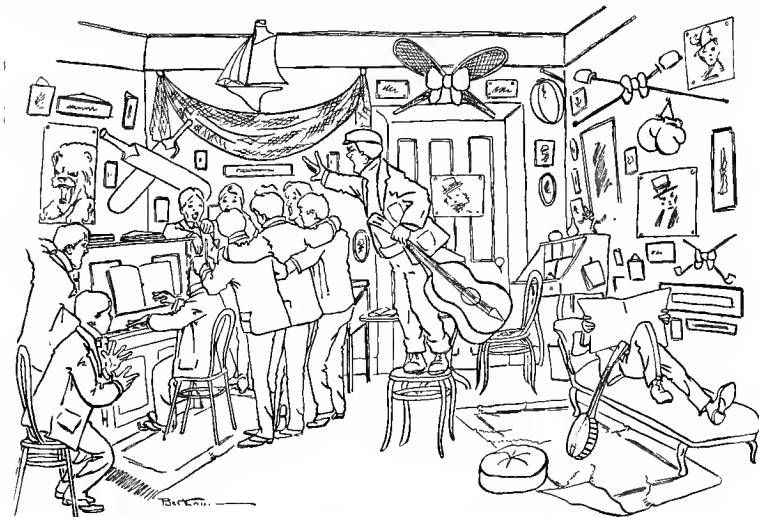
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